

Advancing the **Right**
to **Postsecondary**
Attainment



NCAN

SEPT. 12-14, 2022

ATLANTA, GA

Leveraging a Statewide, Cross-Sector Strategy to Increase FAFSA Completion

Troy Grant & Jessie Greene,
Tennessee Higher Education Commission

Goals for Today

- Overview of statewide strategies to increase FAFSA filing
- Best practices and strategies for increasing FAFSA filing
- Discussion on strategies you can adapt for your work

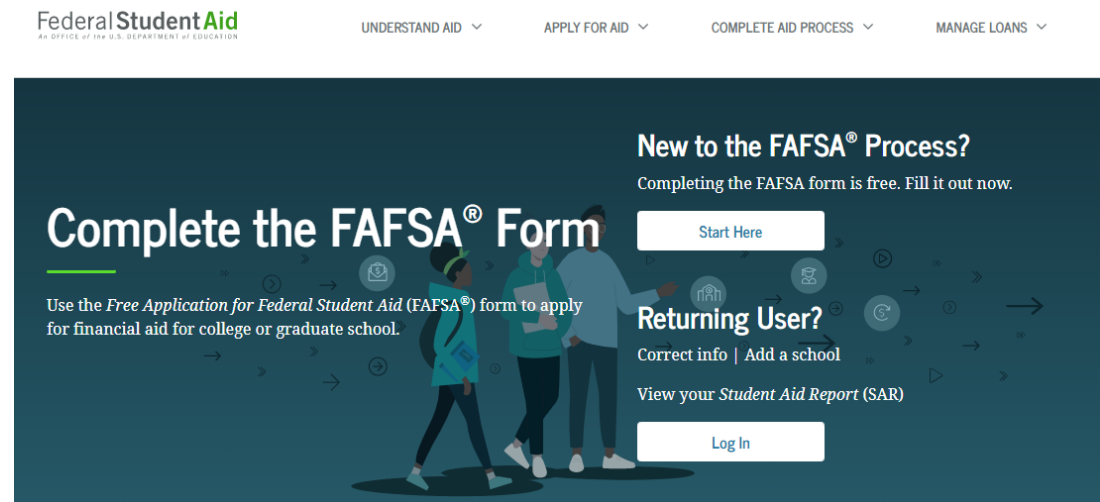
THEC TSAC

What challenges do you face in increasing FAFSA completion in your program, school, or context?

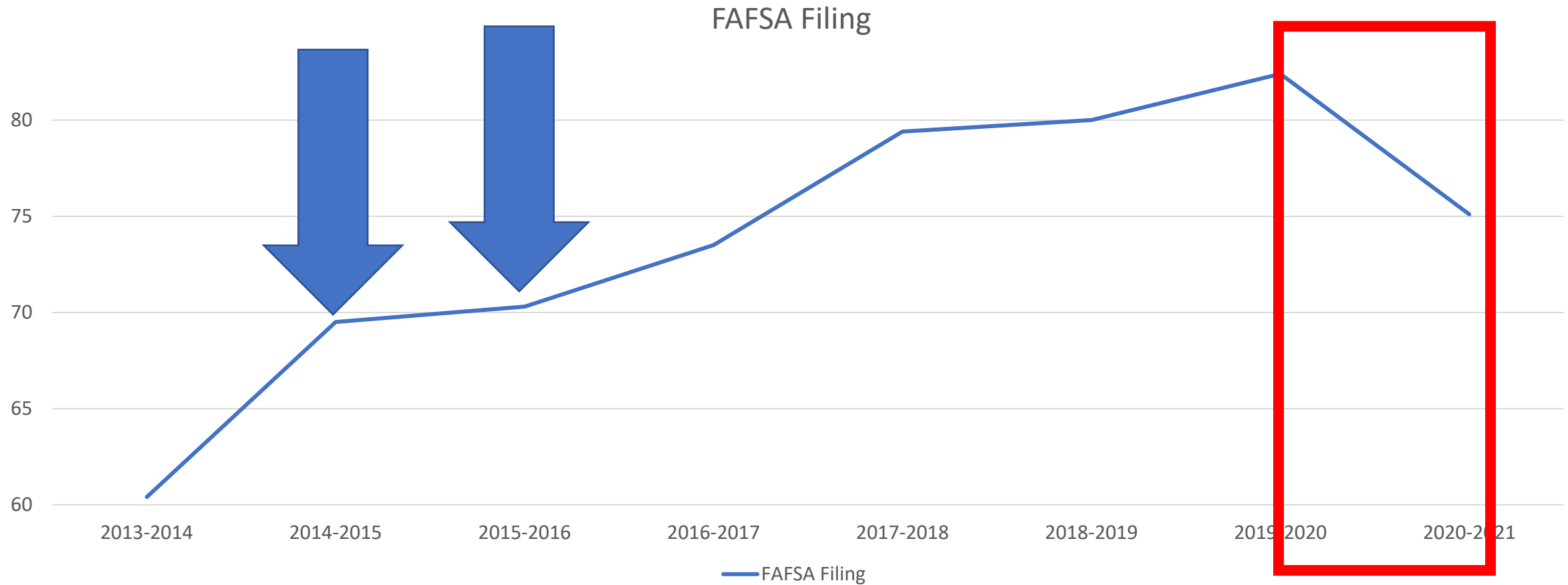
FAFSA in Tennessee

Tennessee Context

- The FAFSA is required for Tennessee state aid, including TN Promise, the Hope Scholarship, and TSAA.
- Last year, Tennessee awarded \$485.8 million in state financial aid – most of this aid requires the completion of the FAFSA.
- In Tennessee, FAFSA submission “season” is tied to the TN Promise deadline.
- TN Promise Checklist for HS Graduating Class
 - Application Due – **November 1, 2022**
 - FAFSA Filing Deadline – **March 1, 2023**



FAFSA Filing in Tennessee

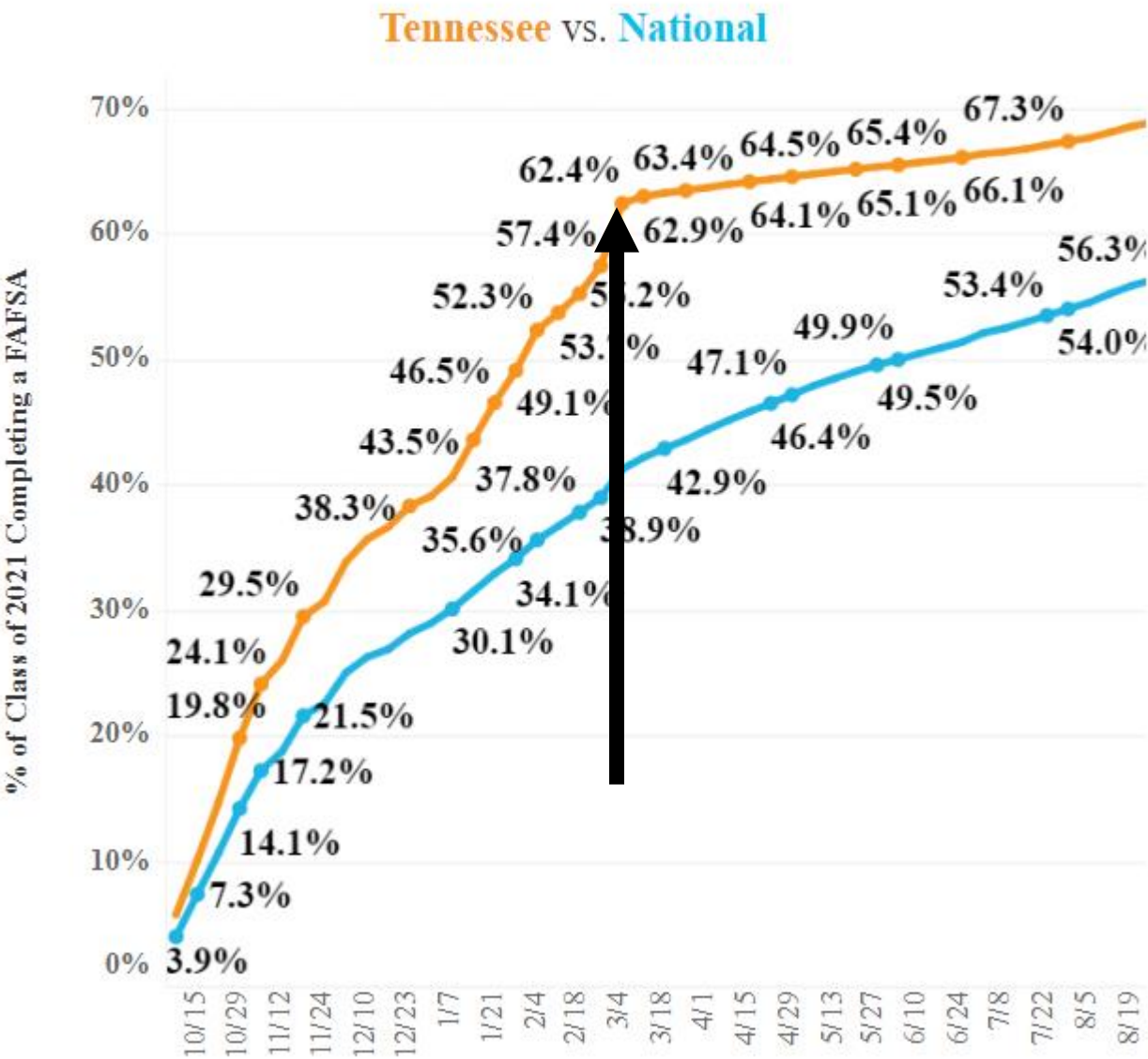


2021 - 2022

1	2	3	4	5
LA	TN	DC	MS	DE
69.9%	68.9%	67.8%	67.4%	66.7%

	Current Rank	% of Seniors Completing
Louisiana	1	69.9%
Tennessee	2	68.9%
Washington, D.C.	3	67.8%
Mississippi	4	67.4%
Delaware	5	66.7%
Texas	6	66.0%
Illinois	7	65.2%
New York	8	63.5%
Alabama	9	63.2%
New Jersey	10	62.1%

Estimated Percent of Seniors Completing a FAFSA



Pell Grant Dollars Left on the Table

Tennessee (2021)

\$47,596,044

NCAN Report: \$3.75 Billion in Pell Grants Goes Unclaimed for High School Class of 2021

Statewide Efforts to Increase FAFSA Completion



TN
FAFSA
FRENZY

TN FAFSA Frenzy

A strategic, data-driven campaign to encourage as many students as possible to submit the FAFSA, with a special emphasis on submitting the FAFSA in time to remain eligible for the TN Promise scholarship.

Resources – Toolkit, CollegeforTN.org, student resources

Communications – Frequent email communications, FAFSA Challenge, etc.

Collaboration – THEC, TSAC, TN Department of Education, the Ayers Foundation, and tnAchieves

Data –weekly high school by high school updates on FAFSA submission



Resources: TN FAFSA Frenzy Toolkit

84 pages of FAFSA and Financial Aid information!

- Event planning support including templates, best practices, and webinars.
- TN Financial Aid Overview
- FAFSA specific resources for completing the form

Resources include:

- Step by Step FSA ID guide with screenshots
- Updated volunteer recruitment and training materials
- FAFSA worksheet previewing all questions asked on the FAFSA



2021 - 2022
TN FAFSA FRENZY TOOLKIT

Educators | School Counselors | College Access Professionals

TNFAFSAFrenzy.gov

Resources: CollegeForTN.org



SCHOOL RESOURCES

Resources and guides focused on helping high schools strengthen their TN FAFSA Frenzy efforts.

SCHOOL RESOURCES



STUDENT RESOURCES

Step-by-step FAFSA-filing instructions and videos to help students complete the FAFSA.

STUDENT RESOURCES



TN FAFSA CHALLENGE

A statewide challenge for Tennessee public high schools with the goal of increasing FAFSA completion.

TN FAFSA CHALLENGE

EVENT RESOURCES

High School

- [2021-2022 TN FAFSA Frenzy Toolkit](#)
- [2022-2023 FAFSA Worksheet](#)
- [FSA ID Worksheet](#)
- [TN FAFSA Frenzy Event Poster](#)
- [TN Promise Flier](#)
- [4 Sources of Fin Aid – Federal Government](#)
- [4 Sources of Fin Aid – TN Financial Aid](#)
- [4 Sources of Fin Aid – Private Scholarships](#)
- [4 Sources of Fin Aid – Your College](#)
- [Do the FAFSA](#)

Middle School

- [TN FAFSA Frenzy Toolkit 2021-22](#)
- [College Comic Strip](#)
- [College Road Map](#)
- [TN Promise Flier](#)
- [TN Reconnect Flier](#)
- [TN Reconnect Flier – Spanish](#)
- [Financial Literacy One-Pager](#)
- [TN Stars 529](#)
- [TNStars 529 Updates](#)
- [Vault-Financial Literacy Game from EverFI](#)

Elementary School

- [College Scholarship Web](#)
- [Path to College Salary Activity](#)
- [TN Reconnect Flier](#)
- [TN Reconnect Flier – Spanish](#)
- [Federal Student Aid – Elementary School College Prep Checklists](#)
- [Vault Financial Literacy Curriculum from Everfi](#)

Resources: Student Resources



MONEY FOR COLLEGE

HOW TO FILL OUT THE FAFSA

Most federal and state financial aid programs require you to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Filing the FAFSA is free! We've made it easy for you to gather the information you will need to complete the FAFSA. The FAFSA is an important part of your higher education journey and it might even mean free money to cover your college costs.



Need help with the FAFSA?

Check out our resources on this page.

Read our **Three-Step Guide** to learn how to create a Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID, fill out the FAFSA, and review your Student Aid Report (SAR).

Watch the **Video Walk-throughs** below to view each step of completing a FAFSA.

Contact Us if you need additional help completing the FAFSA. Reach out to us via email or by calling 615-350-8668. If your call is sent to voicemail, please leave a message with your name, high school name, and phone number (with area code). Someone from our team will respond promptly.

[Email FAFSA Experts](#)

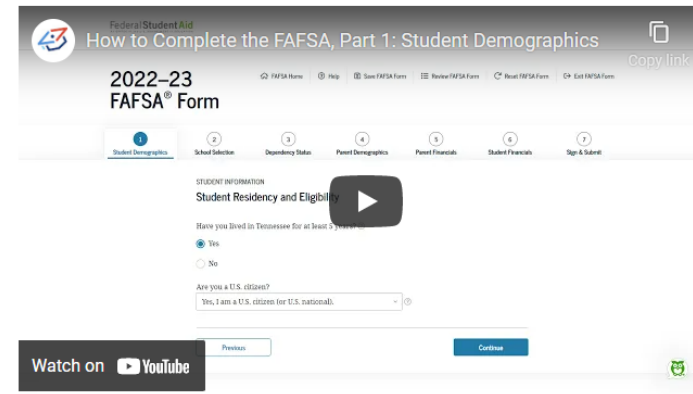
Resources: Student Resources

VIDEO WALK-THROUGHS

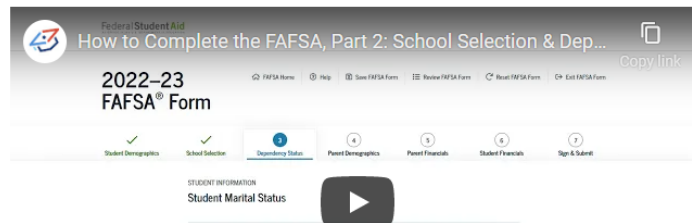
How to Create an FSA ID



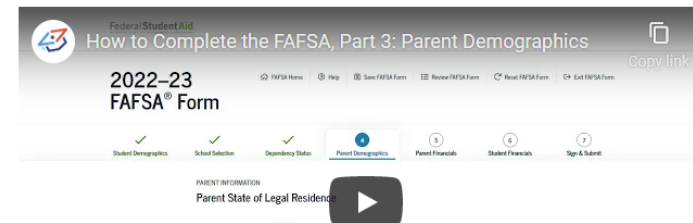
How to Complete the FAFSA, Part 1



How to Complete the FAFSA, Part 2



How to Complete the FAFSA, Part 3



FAFSA Communications

Emphasis on data and capacity building at the local level

- Weekly live webinars with TSAC team
- Emails to counselors, principals, and directors of schools
- Student roster emails
- FAFSA Frenzy Newsletters
- Social Media Toolkit
- Student communications from our partnering organizations



Communications: Weekly Emails

[View this email in your browser](#)



North Greene High School FAFSA Update

FAFSA Deadline Change: Due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and recent weather events, the Tennessee Promise Scholarship FAFSA deadline has been extended to **March 1, 2022**.

71.90% of Tennessee Promise applicants have **completed** a FAFSA.
74% of applicants have **submitted a** FAFSA. The statewide FAFSA completion rate is currently **53.8%**.

The data above reflects FAFSAs filed on or before January 23, 2022. Completed FAFSAs are those where all of the information on the FAFSA is complete and an EFC has been created. A FAFSA that is submitted but not complete may be missing information or signatures. Students will need to complete the FAFSA in order to receive state or federal financial aid.

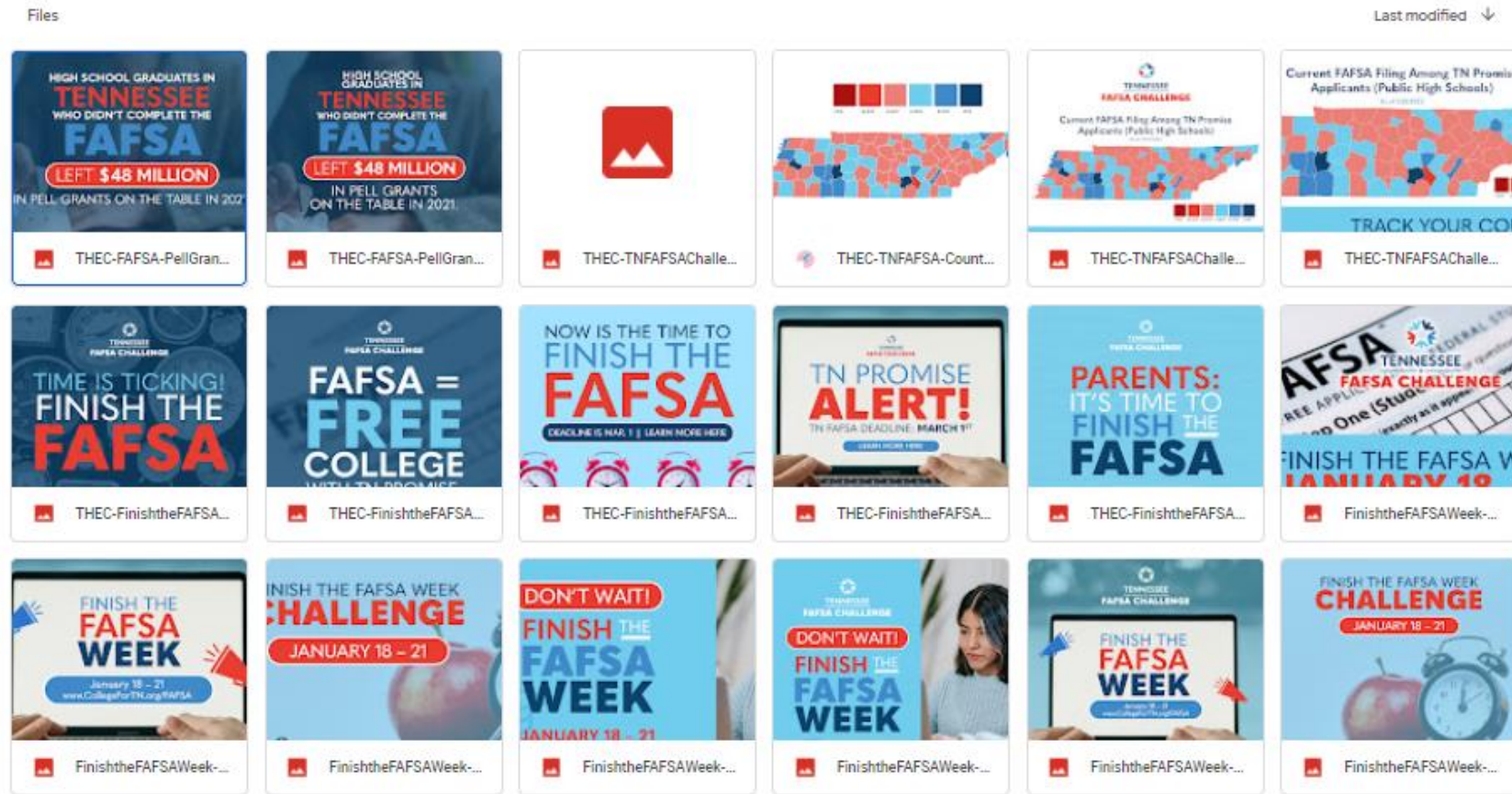
Make sure that your school is participating in the [TN FAFSA Challenge](#). Schools that increase the FAFSA completion rate of TN Promise applicants by 5 percentage points over last year will be recognized as FAFSA Champions. Additionally, we plan to recognize high schools with the highest year over year increase and the highest completion rate. To learn more, visit the [TN FAFSA Challenge webpage](#).

Tennessee FAFSA Visualizations

TN FAFSA Challenge Social Media Toolkit

Communications: Social Media Toolkit

Shared with me > Graphics ▾



Communications: FAFSA Posters and Printable Resources

FOUR SOURCES OF FINANCIAL AID

- FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- TN FINANCIAL AID** →
- YOUR COLLEGE
- PRIVATE SCHOLARSHIPS

TENNESSEE FINANCIAL AID

Tennessee students have access to financial aid resources and programs that are exclusive to our state. Among these are the TN Promise, HOPE Scholarship, Aspire Award, and the TN Student Assistance Award - just to name a few!

Most aid requires that you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at studentaid.gov

To qualify for the TN Promise, fill out the application at tn.gov/tnpromise and ensure you complete all TN Promise requirements.

For more info about TN financial aid, visit CollegeforTN.org

 **COLLEGEFORTN.ORG**

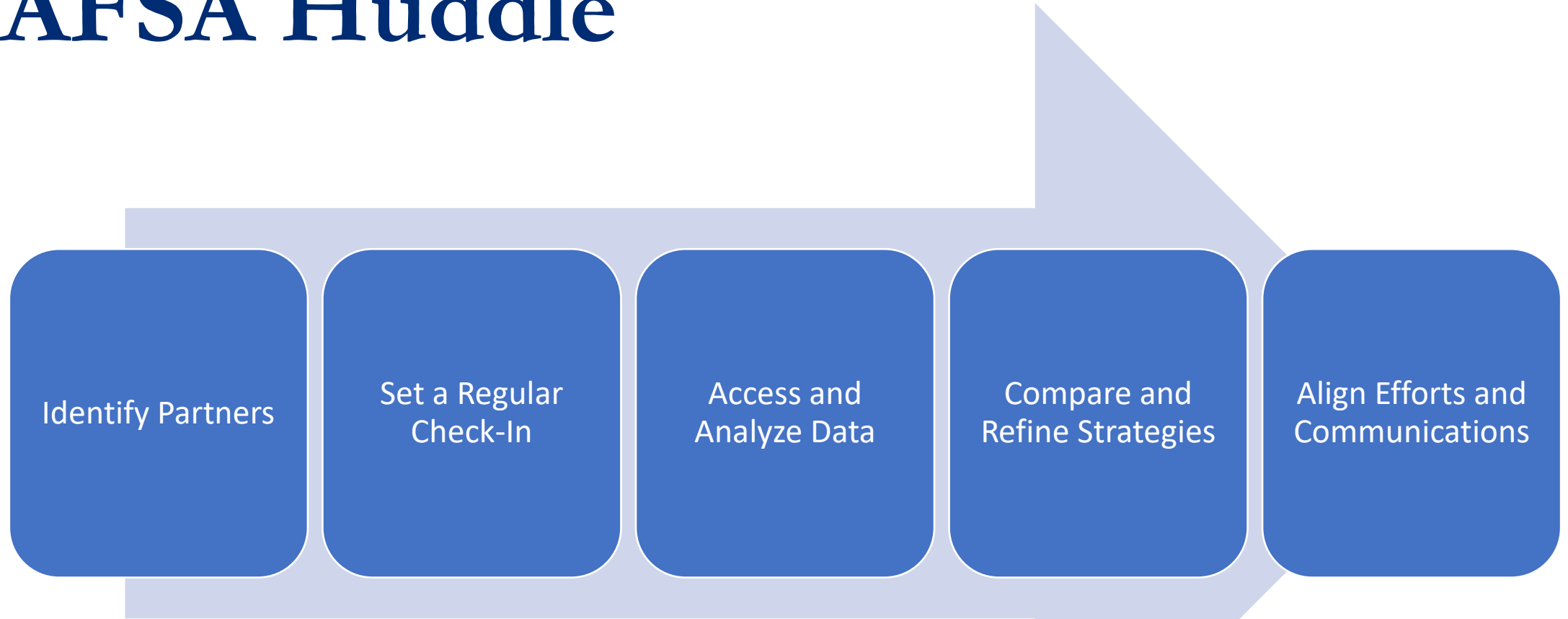
DO THE FAFSA

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THE EARLIER, THE BETTER

 **COLLEGEFORTN.ORG**

Collaboration: Weekly Statewide FAFSA Huddle



Collaboration: Partner Organizations

THEC  **TSAC**



Collaboration: Aligned Communications

Audience	Responsible Party	Action
Partnering Organizations	James Snider	Send an email announcing the change including language to frame the change when communicating with students.
TN Promise applicants	Partnering Organizations	Notification regarding the change in the deadline
K12 Stakeholders	Jason Seay	Send an email to all school counseling/college access contacts
K12 Stakeholders	Troy Grant	Send an email to our TN FAFSA Frenzy listserv, SCORE, and other Tennessee college access organizations
K12 Stakeholders	Troy Grant	Request that TDOE place the update in their CCTE, principal, and director of school communications.
GEAR UP TN/Advise TN sites	Troy Grant	Email site coordinators and advisors announcing the change.
Higher Education Institutions	James Snider	Send a message to all FAST Users
Higher Education Institutions	Leah Louallen	Send a message to all TASFAA members
General Public	Jessie Greene	Post on Twitter and Instagram
General Public	Jessie Greene	Add a banner at the top of CollegeforTN.org and update the Tennessee Promise page to reflect the new deadline
General Public	James Snider	Update deadlines on the Tennessee Promise website

Collaboration: TN FAFSA Challenge

Initiative began in 2021

There are two ways a high school can earn FAFSA Champion status:

- (1) Increase their Tennessee Promise applicant FAFSA completion rate by 5 percentage points or more compared to the previous academic year as of the Tennessee Promise FAFSA deadline
 - (2) Have 95% or more of their Tennessee Promise applicants complete the FAFSA as of the Tennessee Promise FAFSA deadline
- Categories for Highest Completion and Most Improved
 - Banners, Media, Acknowledgement



Outcomes: TN FAFSA Challenge

75 high schools designated FAFSA Champions

New criteria for 2022 – 2023

(1) Increase their Tennessee Promise applicant FAFSA completion rate by 5 percentage points

(2) Have **90%** or more of their Tennessee Promise applicants complete the FAFSA as of the Tennessee Promise FAFSA deadline

- Categories for Highest Completion and Most Improved
- Banners, Media, Acknowledgement



Collaboration: Finish the FAFSA

Week: Jan. 18 – 21

- Elevated in-person visits to high schools to assist with FAFSA completion
- Statewide communications that emphasize the funding that is at stake for filling out the FAFSA
- Social media campaign
- Media coverage and press releases
- Bridges/buildings lit up green across the state



Data: Sources and Methods

US Department of Federal Student Aid (FSA)

- **FSA Filing Rate:**

- The number of FAFSAs submitted (per FSA) divided by the number of HS seniors (TDOE)
- Updated as data comes from the USDOE

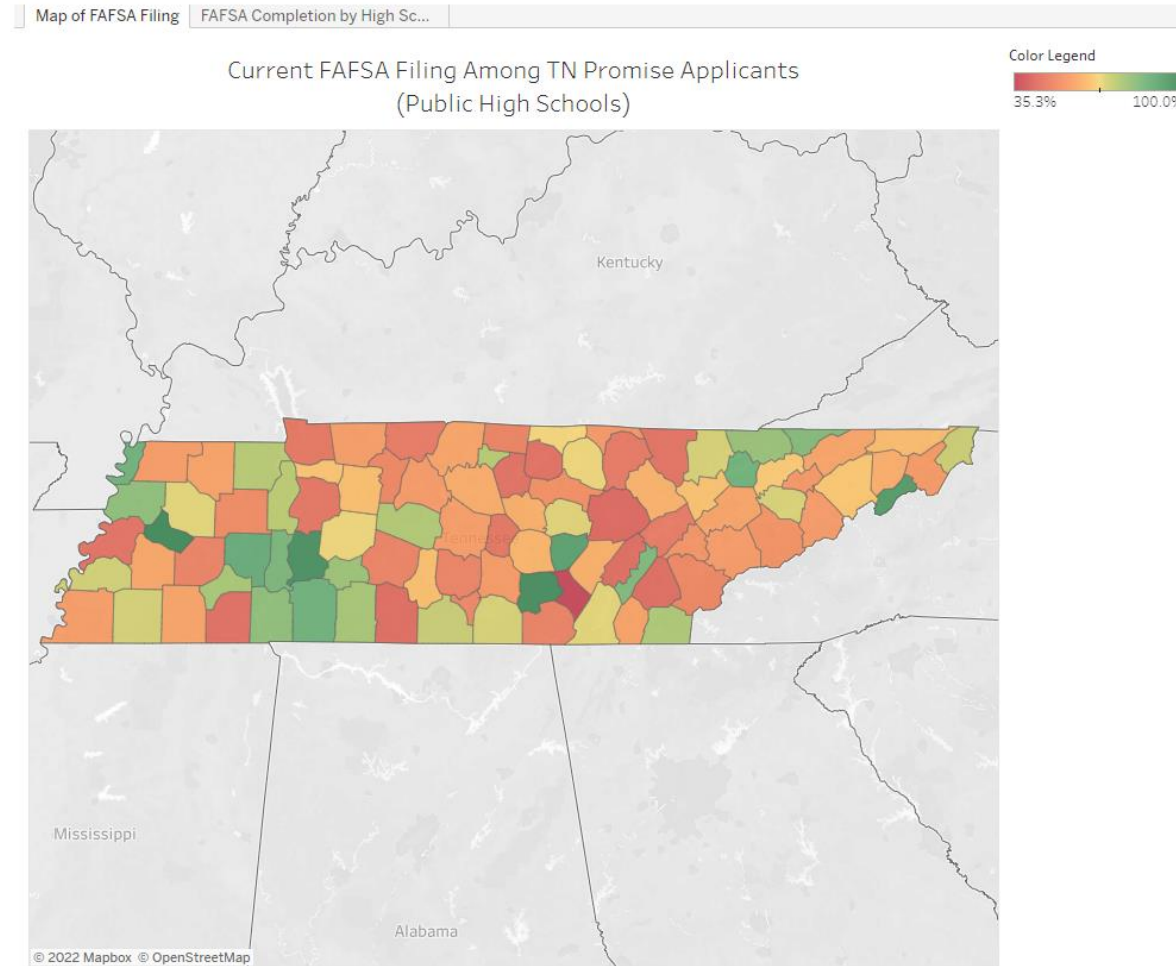
Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation (TSAC) ISIR

- **TN Promise Filing Rate:**

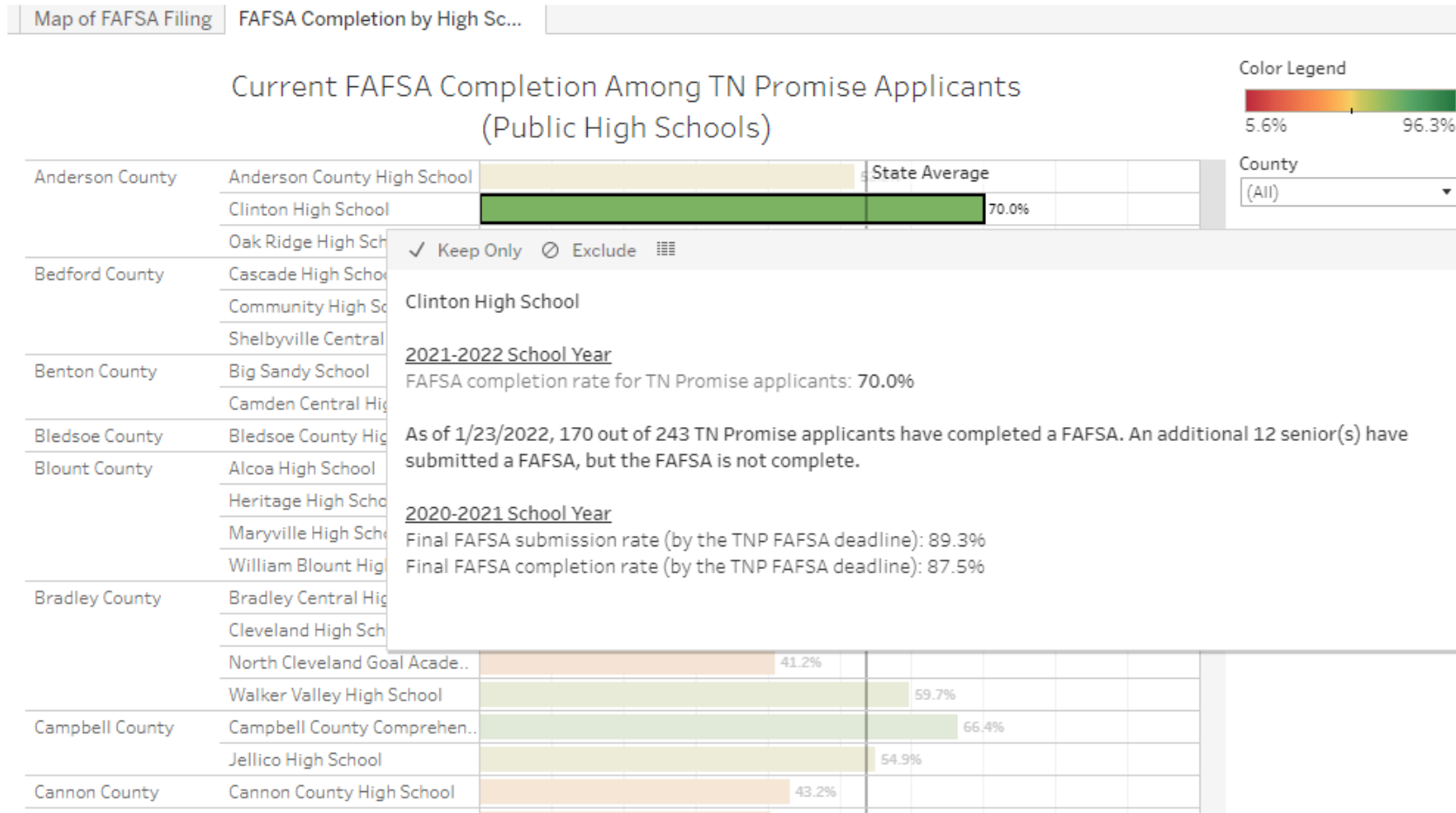
- The number of TN Promise FAFSAs submitted (per TSAC) divided by the number of TN Promise Applicants (per TSAC)
- Updated weekly

Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE), Membership Files, as of October 1st

Data: Visualizations



Data: Visualizations



Data: Weekly Emails

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[Tennessee FAFSA Visualizations](#)

[TN FAFSA Challenge Social Media Toolkit](#)

Keys to Successful FAFSA Submissions and Completions within a School or Program

Keys to Successful FAFSA Submissions and Completions

- Develop a FAFSA Plan
- Create a FAFSA Team
- Implement the Plan

Develop a FAFSA Plan

Strategies for Communication

- Senior Class Meeting
- Parent Financial Aid Meeting

Partnering

- Teachers & Administrators
- Nonprofits organizations & Industry Partners
- Postsecondary Institutions

FAFSA Frenzy Events

Target Students & Parents

Incentives



Creating a FAFSA Team

All hands-on deck, school approach!

- GU Site Coordinator & Advisors
- Senior Teachers & Advisory Teachers
- Counselors
- School Administrators
 - Assistant Principal
 - Administered Assistant
 - Director Of School
- Local College/ Universities Representatives
- Non-profit partners staff
 - Outreach Specialist
 - Statewide Organization Reps.



Implementing the Plan

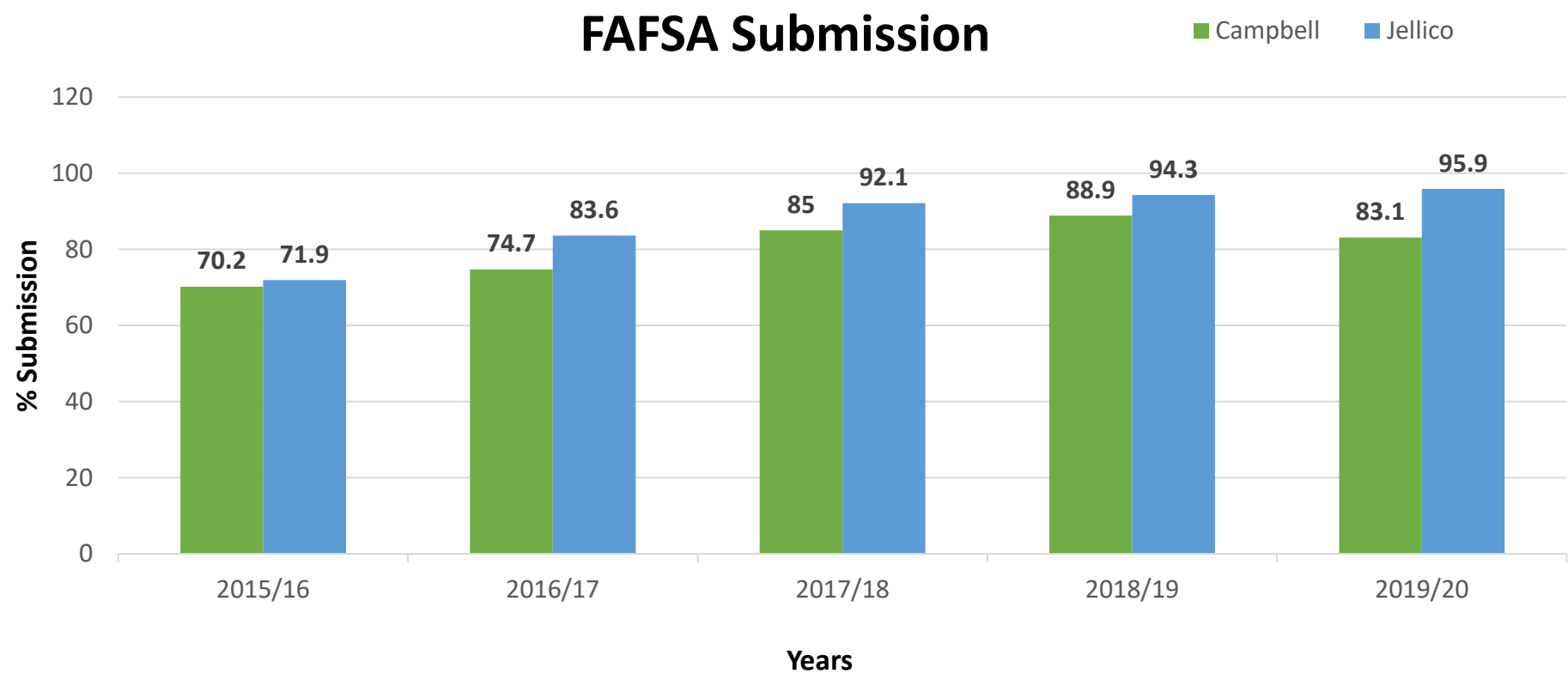
- Start early
- Remove the fear
- Navigate through obstacles together
- Focus on the at-risk students
- FAFSA Follow Ups



Best Practices

- Partner w/ teachers to make completing the FAFSA a class assignment; Plan and act as if EVERY senior is required to complete a FAFSA
- Incentives for students and teachers, too!
- Empowering students and parents to do the FAFSA; Offer to assist EVERY student and parent
- Have FAFSA Frenzy Days early
- Senior and Parent Meeting concerning Financial Aid
- Early and Continuous Communication to Students and Parents

Success at GEAR UP TN Schools



**What strategies have you found
successful in your state/at your
school?**

Questions?



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