APPLY YOURSELF FLORIDA

2024-2025 Site Coordinator Toolkit

ACAC
American College Application Campaign

FL☉RIDA
COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

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About Florida College Access Network

On behalf of Florida College Access Network (FCAN) **thank you for participating in Apply Yourself Florida!**

FCAN is the heart of a movement to ensure today's students are prepared for tomorrow's jobs.

Our Mission: We lead the collaborative movement to ensure every Floridian achieves an education beyond high school and a rewarding career.

Our Vision: We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all.

Our work is guided by our Seven Conditions for Success:

1. **Opportunity for Everyone:** To build a talent-strong economy, all Floridians need access to a postsecondary education and the supports to complete it.
2. **Clear information and guidance:** Students of all ages and families need exposure and counseling early and often to make informed decisions about their futures.
3. **Affordable:** Postsecondary education needs to be within everyone's financial reach, regardless of household income or life circumstances.
4. **Multiple Pathways to Success:** Floridians benefit from multiple learning opportunities for academic achievement and career advancement.
5. **Lifelong learning:** No degree or credential is "one and done;" Floridians need to prepare for career changes through continuous learning opportunities.
6. **Effective use of data:** Transparent access to data on education and economic outcomes, especially for Florida's diverse populations, help achieve our goals.
7. **Community Collaboration:** When community partners work together toward a shared vision, they remove barriers, build a robust workforce, and improve the quality of life for their regions.

About Apply Yourself Florida

Apply Yourself Florida is one of FCAN's four statewide initiatives – including **Florida FAFSA Challenge**, **Florida College Decision Day** and **Plan It Florida** - that encourage and support high school seniors as they take their next educational steps.

This initiative is part of the American College Application Campaign (ACAC), a national effort to increase the number of students applying to college from low-income households and/or are the first in their families to attend college. Host sites hold Apply Yourself Florida events over one or more days in September through November, depending on the school's needs.

The purpose of Apply Yourself Florida is to help students navigate the college application admissions process with the assistance of school staff and volunteers while removing barriers.

Apply Yourself Florida events should:

- Be hosted **at a time for students to conveniently participate**.
- Be open to **all graduating seniors**.
- Give students the opportunity to apply to the college, university, or technical college **of their choice**.

Register Today!

Schools, districts, local college access networks, and community organizations can **register as host sites** for Apply Yourself Florida. Registrants get access to **free resources**, as well as email support with helpful examples and tools.

This guide is adapted from materials originally produced by the American College Application Campaign (ACAC) and the Michigan College Access Network (MCAN). A special thanks to both ACAC and MCAN for permission to adapt this guide for use in Florida, as well as their guidance on the process.

Education is transformational.

Today's students can start anywhere to develop a lifelong career— a college degree or certificate is a great start. 72% of jobs will require education beyond high school by 2031. Studies show that postsecondary education is the surest path to stability, prosperity, and greater lifetime earnings. The impact is life-changing.

Higher education, Higher rewards.

You play a pivotal role in guiding students' educational journeys—your insights shape their path forward.

Share our free tools and resources to support students explore education options that align with their aspirations.

- FAFSA Dashboard

- Statewide Initiatives: Apply Yourself Florida, Florida FAFSA Challenge, and College Decision Day, and Plan It Florida

- Research Reports: Understanding Career and Technical Education, The Case for Dual Enrollment, and The Real Cost of College in Florida

- Register for statewide initiatives to receive more information to free webinars, new resources, and more.

Together, we are building a **Talent Strong Florida**!

[1]Source: Georgetown Center for Workforce and Education, March 2024 report.)

Preparing Students

College Exploration and Application

Helping Students with College Exploration

It is important that students have the opportunity to apply to the school of their choice during your school's Apply Yourself Florida event. There are many resources available to help students determine which schools are a good fit for them.

Explore Fit and Match

Schools that are a good *fit* align with a student's values and preferences regarding student life, class size, location, etc. Schools that are a good *match* align well with a student's academic record.

The following resources help students explore these factors:
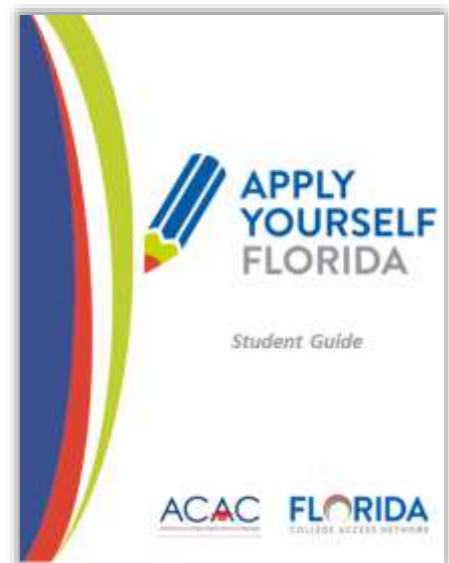
- FloridaShines
- MyACT
- Encourage
- Big Future

Text Advising

Text advising can be a helpful way for your students to get information about college. GetSchooled provides free text advising from real people on topics like college applications and financial aid.
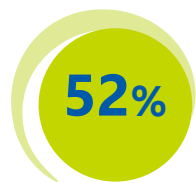
Preparing Students to Complete Applications

The **Apply Yourself Florida Student Guide** helps students with:

- Writing admissions essays
- Requesting letters of recommendation
- Obtaining application fee waivers

Application Fee Waivers

52% of Florida students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.[1] Most of these students also qualify for **college application fee waivers**.

ACT College Application Fee Waivers

School counselors should print the necessary number of fee waivers and sign off on student eligibility. Students must also sign the form. Download the fee waiver here.

SAT College Application Fee Waivers

Students can access the fee waivers directly through their online College Board Account. Counselor approval is not required. Review eligibility requirements. Find more information here.

National Association of College Admissions Counselors (NACAC) College Application Fee Waivers

School counselors must print the form and sign off on student eligibility. Learn more about the form here.

Admissions/Fee Waiver Information by Florida Universities	
FAU Undergraduate Admissions	New College of Florida Undergraduate Admissions
FAMU Undergraduate Admissions	UF Undergraduate Admissions
FGCU Undergraduate Admissions	UCF Undergraduate Admissions
FIU Undergraduate Admissions	UNF Undergraduate Admissions
Florida Polytechnic University Undergraduate Admissions	USF Undergraduate Admissions
FSU Undergraduate Admissions	UWF Undergraduate Admissions

Event Planning

Resources & Strategies

Ideas for Your Event

Successful Apply Yourself Florida events often create excitement about college applications by incorporating special activities or incentives.

Best Practices:

- **Designate a host site coordinator** as the contact.
- **Secure a space with computer access** for student use.
- **Promote the event** to students and parents via your communications channels.
- **Recruit volunteers**. Ask community leaders from the local area to help.
- **Collect and submit data** to FCAN following the event on the number of students that participated and the number of applications submitted using the survey at the end of this toolkit.
- Seek support from your area's **Local College Access Network (LCAN)** if you have one.
- Follow up with students to ensure they **completed their applications and the FAFSA**.
- Continue building a college-going culture by **registering** for the **Florida FAFSA Challenge**, **Florida College Decision Day** and **Plan It Florida**.

Activities for Your Event

- Help with writing essays for college applications or scholarships.
- Invite local college and career technical school admissions or financial aid reps.
- Consider providing snacks and/or playing music to create a fun environment for students.

Ask Me About It: Print out the "Ask Me About It!" posters and have teachers display them. Encourage students to share their college experience and ask questions.

Door Decorating: Assign each homeroom a college or university to research, and give them time to decorate their doors for that college. Give the best decorated door a prize.

Other Activities:

- Designate a college t-shirt day during spirit week
- Host college trivia during announcements
- Host a panel discussion with representatives from a local college/university

Event Timeline

Time to Event	Tasks to Complete
7-8 Weeks	☐ Designate a site coordinator and <u>register</u> with FCAN ☐ Confirm event dates with your school's administration and team ☐ Reserve computer lab space for event and volunteer training
6 Weeks	☐ Finalize your event schedule ☐ Create an event promotion plan ☐ Decide how many volunteers you need
5 Weeks	☐ Determine raffle prizes if necessary ☐ Start recruiting volunteers ☐ Begin preparing students for the application process
4 Weeks	☐ Make a list of all the supplies you will need for the event ☐ Begin promoting the event in the school ☐ Continue to reach out to businesses/volunteers
3 Weeks	☐ Make arrangements for students who need application fee waivers ☐ Create a schedule for volunteers ☐ If hosting volunteer training, prepare a presentation.
2 Weeks	☐ Finalize volunteer list and complete required background checks ☐ Share time/place of the event and confirm volunteer participation ☐ Send out a press release if you plan to work with local media
1 Week	☐ Send reminder to volunteers and host volunteer training session ☐ Remind students and families to complete worksheets in *Apply Yourself Florida Student Guide*
Day of Event	☐ Set up a sign-in/sign-out station to <u>track participating students and collect data</u> ☐ Make sure each student receives an instruction sheet ☐ Pair volunteers with students who need extra assistance ☐ Direct students who have completed applications to sign out/receive sticker ☐ Hand out flyers for follow-up activities, like FAFSA completion events
After Event	☐ Follow up with students who need to submit application fee waivers ☐ Thank volunteers and businesses who supported the event ☐ Send follow-ups to students and families about next steps in the college-going process ☐ Remind students to complete the FAFSA ☐ Submit participation data/feedback with the Apply Yourself Florida survey

Budgeting

Event Cost

Most site coordinators host their events with a small budget. Some coordinators have hosted their event at no cost. Use the budget table below to help you keep track.

Sample Budget Table

Item/Service	Purchased/Donated	Anticipated Cost	Actual Cost
	Total		

Community Outreach

Reaching Out to Parents and Volunteers

Parent/Guardian Outreach

When helping students take steps towards continuing their education, it is important to include parents/guardians. Including them helps to build a college-going culture at home.

How Parents/Guardians Can Participate:

- Help students explore options for education beyond high school.

- Provide students with information they may need for completing college applications and the FAFSA, like Social Security Number(s) or tax information.

- Volunteer during Apply Yourself Florida events.

Tips for Parent/Guardian Outreach:

- Mail letters to parents instead of relying on students to take them home.

- Send letters in English and Spanish to all parents.

- Use text reminders or phone calls through free services like Remind or check with your school district for options for recording robocalls.

- Follow up after the event to thank them for participating, congratulate their students, and encourage them to take next steps.

Recruiting and Managing Volunteers

Volunteers can help during any stage of event preparation to keep things running smoothly.

Volunteers Examples:

- School alumni, especially near peers
- Student families/Parent-Teacher Association
- Area college or university admissions and financial aid representatives
- Student organizations from local colleges/universities
- Business, community, and local government leaders
- Members of your Local College Access Network (LCAN)
- Youth programs (YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, United Way)

> ### Here's a tip!
>
> **Organize 3 volunteers for every 20-25 students working on applications. Make sure you have volunteers to cover breaks too!**

Training Volunteers

- Plan to hold volunteer training either the week before or the day(s) of your event.
- Host training in-person or virtually.

Tasks for Volunteers

Before the Event

- Assist students with admissions essays
- Support promotion and outreach efforts
- Post directional signs around the school and decorate

> **Make sure to find out whether your school requires background checks for volunteers**

During the Event

- Help students access the college/university websites, begin applications, and answer any questions students may have.
- Ensure students sign in when they arrive and sign out reporting the number of applications they submitted; tracking participation can help you measure your event's success and attract support in the future.

Promoting Your Event

Reaching Out to Your School and Community

Promotion Strategies

Site coordinators can use a variety of promotion strategies to make sure their students, parents, and community know about the event.

Traditional Media

- Consider contacting television stations, radio, newspapers, or community newsletters to spread the word about your event.

- Check with school administration to ensure your media outreach complies with the district media policy.
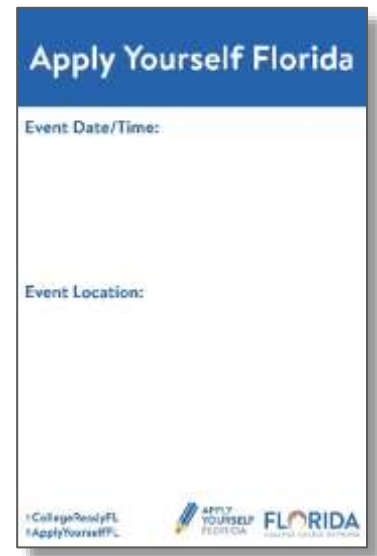
Social Media

Social media can help promote your event, create excitement, and answer questions that students, parents, and volunteers might have.

- Using hashtags can make it easy for community members and statewide partners like FCAN to find updates from your event. FCAN recommends using the hashtags **#IApplied**, **#ApplyYourselfFL**, and **#CollegeReadyFL**.
- Create an event that volunteers can RSVP to online.

Flyers and Posters

- Posters and flyers can be downloaded from the Apply Yourself Florida webpage.

After Your Event

Following Up with Your Students & FCAN

Next Steps for Students and Schools

Submitting a college application is the first step students must take in the complex college admissions process. Students often require additional support navigating their next steps.

After applying, students should:

- Complete the FAFSA to learn what financial aid they might qualify for.
- Send in application fee waivers (if eligible).
- If students mailed in fee waivers, encourage them to follow up with schools.
- Make sure students included all necessary materials (letters of recommendation, admissions essay, etc.).

After the event, site coordinators should:

- Submit tracking data to FCAN (see next page for more details)
- Follow up with students on completing applications and making final decisions
- Begin working with students on FAFSA completion
- Begin planning school participation in the Florida FAFSA Challenge and Florida College Decision Day (see toolkits to get started).
  - o **Access resources for the Florida FAFSA Challenge**
  - o **Access resources for Florida College Decision Day**

Data Collection

Collecting data about the number of students participating in your event and the number of applications submitted helps you to measure the success of your program from year to year. This can help you raise support in the future.

Reporting your data helps FCAN to track the growth of the campaign across the state.

Best Practices

- To protect student privacy, do not include student names in data submitted.

- Schools may choose to collect student-level data to follow up with students and track long-term effectiveness of their application week events.

How to Collect Data

- Print out the Senior Sign-out Form and have students complete it before leaving.

- Set up a table where students will sign out.

- If you are not interested in collecting student-level data, simply have a volunteer ask students how many applications they submitted and maintain a tally sheet.

Download the Senior Sign-out Form

Reporting Your Data

- You can fill out the survey sent through the site coordinator emails.

- Best estimates are acceptable for reported numbers of students participating and applications submitted.

Apply Yourself Florida Survey

Participation Data

Please report the number of seniors participating in your application event(s), as well as the total number of applications submitted at these events.

School name, county: _____

Date(s) of your College Application event: _____

Approximately how many students participated in your event? _____

Approximately how many applications were submitted? _____

Were students able to get assistance with their FAFSAs and/or create their FSA ID? Yes/No

Did you find the Apply Yourself Florida Site Coordinator Guide helpful? Yes/No

Did you find the Apply Yourself Florida Student Guide helpful? Yes/No

What other resources could FCAN provide to help support your future events?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Please share a testimonial on how your Apply Yourself Florida event has helped your students.

_____
_____
_____
_____