



APPLY YOURSELF FLORIDA

2026-2027 Toolkit



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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 statewide collaborative movement to strengthen Florida by ensuring every Floridian attains education beyond high school toward a rewarding career.

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

FCAN's work is guided by 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.

Schools or organizations hold Apply Yourself Florida events 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.

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.

- Statewide Initiatives: [Apply Yourself Florida](#), [Florida FAFSA Challenge](#), and [College Decision Day](#), and [Plan It Florida](#)
- Research Reports: [Understanding Career and Technical Education](#), [The Real Cost of College in Florida](#), [2026 State of College Access and Student Success](#)
- [Register](#) for statewide initiatives to receive more information to free webinars, new resources, and more.

Together, we are building a [Talent Strong Florida!](#)

[Access the Talent Strong Florida Toolkit](#)

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

Helping Students with College Exploration

The application process involves many steps — researching schools, writing essays, completing forms, and meeting deadlines — and having guidance from counselors, teachers, or family members helps students stay organized and focused. The following resources can 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:

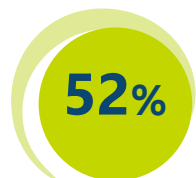
- [FloridaShines](#)
- [MyACT](#)
- [Encourage](#)
- [Big Future](#)

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



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

<u>FAU Undergraduate Admissions</u>	<u>New College of Florida Undergraduate Admissions</u>
<u>FAMU Undergraduate Admissions</u>	<u>UF Undergraduate Admissions</u>
<u>FGCU Undergraduate Admissions</u>	<u>UCF Undergraduate Admissions</u>
<u>FIU Undergraduate Admissions</u>	<u>UNF Undergraduate Admissions</u>
<u>Florida Polytechnic University Undergraduate Admissions</u>	<u>USF Undergraduate Admissions</u>
<u>FSU Undergraduate Admissions</u>	<u>UWF Undergraduate Admissions</u>

¹ U.S. Department of Education, Number and percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by state: 2022-23. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d23/tables/dt23_204.10.asp.

Event Ideas

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

Best Practices

- **Designate a school staff member** 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 \(LCAN\)](#).
- 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](#).

Event Activities

Statement/Essay Writing Sessions

- Focused workshops to help students brainstorm, draft, and revise their college essays.
- Opportunities for peer review and one-on-one feedback from teachers or writing coaches.

College Rep Visits

- Visits from college admissions representatives to talk about their schools, programs, and what they look for in applicants.
- Often includes Q&A sessions and opportunities for students to introduce themselves directly.

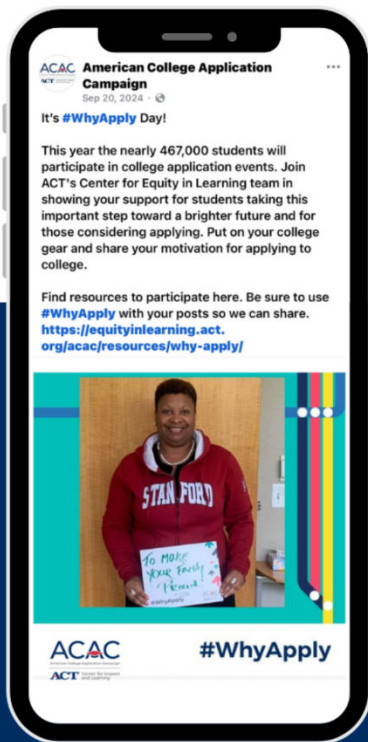
College Research Sessions

- Guided time for students to research colleges that align with their interests and academic goals.
- Use of tools like Naviance, College Board's BigFuture, or career interest quizzes.

#WhyApply Day

#WhyApply Day is sponsored by the American College Application Campaign, an initiative of ACT's Center for Impact and Learning, which partners with high schools across the country to host events supporting students through the college application process.

This year, **#WhyApply Day is September 18, 2026**. On this day, ACAC encourages you to wear college gear and share why you applied to college while using the hashtag #WhyApply on social media. Don't forget to tag and follow FCAN on social media.



#WhyApply participation is easy

On Sept. 18:

- 1 Wear your college gear and snap a photo.
- 2 Share on your personal or organization social and use the #WhyApply hashtag.

Resources:

- [#WhyApply Selfie Printout \(PDF\)](#)
- [#WhyApply digital template](#)
- [WhyApply 2026 Social Media Toolkit](#)
- [Email Header Horizontal 2026](#)
- [Email Graphic Vertical 2026](#)
- [Sample Newsletter Copy 2026](#)

For students:

- [#IApplied printout](#)
- [#IApplied sticker](#)
- [#IApplied pennant](#)

Event Timeline

Time to Event	Tasks to Complete
7-8 Weeks	☐ Designate a site coordinator and register 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 <i>Apply Yourself Florida Student Guide</i>
Day of Event	☐ Set up a sign-in/sign-out station to track participating students and collect data ☐ 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

Community Outreach

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

Parents/guardians can help students explore options for education after high school, provide their student with information they may need to complete applications, or even volunteer during an event.

Recruiting and Managing Volunteers

Volunteers can help with event preparation. Volunteer examples include school alumni, student organizations from local colleges, or members of your local college access network. Find out whether your school requires background checks for volunteers.

Hold a volunteer training the week before or the day of your event.

Tasks for Volunteers

Before the Event

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

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.

Promotion Strategies

Various promotion strategies can be used to make sure students, parents, and the 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 where volunteers can RSVP.

Flyers and Posters

- Posters and flyers can be downloaded from the [Apply Yourself Florida webpage](#).

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).
- Make sure students included all necessary materials (letters of recommendation, admissions essay, etc.).

After the event, schools 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
- Plan a financial aid event and college signing day event:
 - [Access resources for the Florida FAFSA Challenge](#)
 - [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.

Reporting your data helps FCAN 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 a 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, ask students how many applications they submitted and maintain a tally sheet.

Reporting Your Data

- Fill out the survey sent through the College Ready Florida email list.
- 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 events, as well as the total number of applications submitted at these events.

School name, county: _____

Approximately how many students participated in your event? _____

Approximately how many applications were submitted? _____

Did you find the Apply Yourself Florida Site Coordinator 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.

