



Warren County High School Recognized for Most Improved FAFSA Completion Rate in Tennessee

McMinnville, Tenn., September 4, 2024 – The Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) has recognized Warren County High School as the “Most Improved Large School” in the state for Tennessee Promise FAFSA application completion for the Class of 2024. The 20.5 percent increase in FAFSA completion rates from the previous year also places WCHS as a Tennessee FAFSA Champion.

To earn champion status, a school must increase its Tennessee Promise applicant FAFSA completion rate by five percentage points or more compared to the previous academic year as of the filing deadline and/or have 90 percent or more of their Tennessee Promise applicants complete the FAFSA. Warren County High School achieved both, with the increase in percentage raising the school's overall completion rate to 91.6 percent.

Recognizing the need to boost FAFSA completion rates—a key factor in increasing college enrollment and securing financial aid—Warren County Schools partnered with the Ayers Foundation Trust to bring four counselors and one success coordinator into Warren County High School. This partnership has resulted in a significant improvement in FAFSA completion rates and opportunities for students to pursue higher education.

“The biggest reason Warren County High School saw such a tremendous increase in FAFSA completion this past school year, despite the numerous challenges the new FAFSA had, is due to the great work of the Ayers Foundation Trust counselors,” said Chris Hobbs, Executive Principal of Warren County High School. “With 2023-2024 being the first year in having Ayers Foundation Trust counselors embedded in the schools, the growth in several metrics increased including Tennessee Promise applications, postsecondary applications, and of course, FAFSA completion. Along with FAFSA completion, another requirement to maintain Tennessee Promise eligibility is to complete 8 hours of community service. The class of 2024 completed over 2200 volunteer hours,” he added.

The Ayers Foundation Trust focuses on improving the lives of young people in rural Tennessee by providing resources and support for higher education. The Ayers Scholars Program, a key initiative of the foundation, has been instrumental in increasing college-going rates in the schools it serves. According to an analysis by THEC, the college-going rate in rural high schools supported by the Ayers Foundation’s program was five times higher than the state’s average growth, demonstrating a 4.5 percentage point increase compared to the 1.5 percent increase statewide.

Dr. Grant Swallows, Warren County Director of Schools said, “Our focus has always been on creating opportunities for our students to succeed while in school and then beyond. The

collaboration between our school counseling team and the Ayers Foundation counselors has been instrumental in providing the resources and support our students need to navigate the college financial aid process. This recognition by THEC is a testament to the hard work and commitment of our students, staff and community partners.”

About Warren County High School:

Warren County High School, located in McMinnville, TN, is committed to fostering academic excellence and preparing students for success in higher education and beyond. With a focus on academics, WCHS offers a broad curriculum designed to challenge and inspire. The school is dedicated to creating a supportive environment that encourages students to reach their full potential.

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