



PATERSON BOARD OF EDUCATION

Free Application for Federal Student Aid/NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application Graduation Requirement

(Effective with the Class of 2025)

Beginning with the Class of 2025 (and beyond), each graduating high school senior in Paterson is required, as part of the state's new graduation requirement, to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid or the NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application.

Why is the FAFSA/NJAFSA a graduation requirement?

Research indicates two-thirds of almost all living wage jobs will require a postsecondary credential. Training for credentials can be expensive and entrance applications can sometimes be challenging. Paterson Public Schools is committed to preparing all students for the transition from high school to multiple pathways after graduation – both college and career. We support FAFSA/NJAFSA for all graduates. We are committed to supporting students and families with successfully completing the application.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) gives students access to the largest source of financial aid to pay for college or vocational school. Essentially, it helps with the cost of education and technical training after high school.

Through completing the FAFSA, students can be considered for federal financial aid, including Pell grants, work-study programs, and loans. In addition, many states and colleges, as well as some private financial aid providers, use FAFSA information to determine students' eligibility for aid.^[i]

Research shows that students who complete the FAFSA are more likely to go to college and persist through graduation. ^{[ii],[iii],[iv]} The more students completing the FAFSA, the more who will be awarded financial aid. With financial aid, students have a greater chance of completing college and achieving their economic, career and personal goals. Simply put, accessing and completing the FAFSA can have a generational impact.

As such, beginning with the 2025 Cohort, the FAFSA is to be completed as a graduation requirement. This is an opportunity to have access to the resources that are needed to consider and enter postsecondary education – whether it be 2-year, 4-year or technical school. In addition, students identified as New Jersey residents who do not believe that they meet the requirements for FAFSA, may consider the New Jersey Alternative Financial Aid Application (NJAFSA) as an option. The NJAFSA will enable students to receive financial assistance to support their post-secondary college and career goals.



FAFSA completion benefits all students:

- The U.S. Department of Education's office of Federal Student Aid provides more than \$120 billion in grants, loans, and work-study funds each year to help pay for college or career
- Visit StudentAid.gov today to learn how to pay for your higher education. The FAFSA must be completed to apply for grants, loans, and work-study. All financial information is kept confidential.
- Most students are eligible to receive financial aid from the federal government to help pay for college or career school. Age, race, or field of study will not affect eligibility for federal student aid. The FAFSA4caster at fafsa.gov provides a way to estimate (click [HERE!](#)) how much financial aid students possibly could receive from the U.S. government
- Financial need increases with college cost and some colleges can cost more than \$65,000 a year. Many of these colleges, state agencies, and scholarship foundations require the FAFSA to award scholarships and grants to middle- and upper-middle-class students attending expensive schools. The most generous private colleges, for example, award need-based aid to some students from families earning more than \$200,000 a year.
- FAFSA is a prerequisite for Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Grad PLUS Loans, and Parent PLUS loans. These loans are available without regard to demonstrated financial need and have lower interest rates than private loans.

NJAFSA may be an option for some students:

Complete the NJAFSA application if you are not a United States citizen or eligible noncitizen and meet the following criteria:

- Attended a New Jersey high school for at least three (3) years
- Graduated from a New Jersey high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma in New Jersey
- Registered for Selective Service (male students only)
- Can file an affidavit stating that you have filed an application to legalize your immigration status or will file an application as soon as you are eligible to do so

The district and each high school will work with local partners to provide FAFSA completion support, virtual FAFSA nights for students and families, and provide assistance and resources to school personnel to help get your questions answered.

If you do not qualify for the FAFSA or the NJ Alternative Financial Aid Application, parents/guardians should complete the FAFSA/NJAFSA Exemption Form and submit it to your school counselor by May 1st of your senior year.



Here is a list of important links:

General FAFSA information: <https://studentaid.gov/>

FAFSA filing and eligibility requirements: <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements>

FAFSA Application: <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

NJAFAA Application: <https://www.hesaa.org/Pages/NJAlternativeApplication.aspx>

FAFSA/NJAFAA Exemption Form:

[i] Federal Student Aid. Retrieved from <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>

[ii] McKinney, L., & Novak, H. (2013). The Relationship Between FAFSA Filing and Persistence Among First-Year Community College Students. *Community College Review*, 41(1), 63–85.

[iii] Novak, H. and McKinney, L. (2011) "The Consequences of Leaving Money on the Table: Examining Persistence among Students Who Do Not File a FAFSA," *Journal of Student Financial Aid*: Vol. 41 : Iss. 3, Article 1.

[iv] What Works Clearinghouse (ED). (2014). WWC Review of the Report "Freshman Year Financial Aid Nudges: An Experiment to Increase FAFSA Renewal and College Persistence." What Works Clearinghouse Single Study Review. In *What Works Clearinghouse*. What Works Clearinghouse.
