



Baseline Measurements and Impact



Using data can be an effective way to examine a school's current FAFSA completion rate and opportunity for growth. To more fully gauge a schools current FAFSA completion picture we recommend disaggregating data to see how completion rates breakdown by race/ethnicity, gender, and free and reduced lunch status. In this section we examine: 1) how to calculate the FAFSA completion rate; 2) where to get the data; and 3) special considerations.

How to calculate the FAFSA completion rate?

At its most basic, FAFSA completion should be very straightforward. When calculating a FAFSA completion rate one would take the total number of students that completed the FAFSA and divide it by the total number of current high school seniors. This number will yield a FAFSA completion rate for a particular high school, district, region, state etc.

Where do we get the data?

In the past, high schools often relied on self-reported surveys to estimate their FAFSA completion rates. Unfortunately, those rates were often inflated and inaccurate. To assist schools and districts, Federal Student Aid now provides high schools with current data about FAFSA submissions and completions so that high schools can track their progress and to help ensure that students can be reminded to complete the FAFSA. In Arizona this data is warehoused at the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education.

What are some special considerations?

While we have the ability to track FAFSA, we must also identify that it will be difficult to be 100 percent precise. For example, Federal Student Aid doesn't report numbers for schools with five or fewer students. Therefore, we do lose some data with very small schools. Second, FAFSA is calculated by the number of FAFSA completers by the number of graduates. Yet, sometimes not all seniors graduate. As a result, sometimes FAFSA completion rates are slightly off. In Arizona we asked stakeholders to dig deeper than aggregate data. Table X below shows the data we recommend that each school and/or community collect around FAFSA completion. Third, FAFSA completion is also an indicator of College and Career Readiness for each Arizona school. Increased FAFSA completion therefore, has a direct effect on a school's letter grade for the state. As such, each school should be collecting data from the Arizona Commission for Postsecondary Education on FAFSA completion.

Table X:

Recommended Indicators for FAFSA Completion

Number of Current High School Seniors
Number of Current High School Seniors who Completed FAFSA
Proportion of Students who Completed FAFSA
Proportion of Students who Completed FAFSA by Race/Ethnicity
Proportion of Hispanic students who Completed the FAFSA
Proportion of Students who Completed the FAFSA by Gender
Proportion of First Generation Students who Completed the FAFSA
Proportion of Free/Reduced Lunch Students who Completed the FAFSA