

# Florida FAFSA Finish Line Data Addendum

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## About the Florida FAFSA Finish Line Data Dashboard

The Florida College Access Network (Florida C.A.N.!) has created the Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard to help schools, researchers and other stakeholders of education to monitor the number of 12<sup>th</sup> graders at more than 600 public schools who have completed the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) during the 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

## About the FAFSA

The federal government provides more than \$150 billion in grants, loans and work-study funds each year for students to attend college or career school. The FAFSA, or the Free Application for Federal Student Aid is required to determine a student's eligibility for these resources. The FAFSA is completed after applying to college(s), so students may evaluate any financial aid offers or packages received from prospective institutions before choosing. Because many types of student aid have limited funds and colleges enforce application or admissions deadlines, it is advised prospective students complete their FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1<sup>st</sup>, which is when the FAFSA becomes available for each application cycle.

## About the data

School-level FAFSA completion rates were calculated using data from two sources, the [U.S. Department of Education Central Processing System](#) and the [Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Accountability and Information Services](#).

## About U.S. Department of Education data

The U.S. Department of Education provides school-level FAFSA submission and completion data for 12<sup>th</sup> graders by state, bi-weekly from January to June and monthly thereafter. Included in this dashboard is school-level FAFSA completion data from January 1 to the end of June for 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years.

## About Florida Department of Education data

All other non-FAFSA school data included in the Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard, including school names, charter status, student service type, locations, enrollments, free- or reduced-price lunch rates, and high school graduation rates were provided by the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Education Information & Accountability Services.

## Matching FAFSA completion and public school data

When students submit the FAFSA, they are required to self-report the school and city from which they are attending. Since school names are student-reported, they can vary considerably and are subject to error. When the U.S. Department of Education aggregates school-level data, they combine school variations to a single school reference when possible. In some cases, however, records cannot be matched and duplicates exist. For example, in the U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA database "Legacy Charter School" and "Legacy High Charter" (both in Ocoee) have separate listings. While these names appear to be alike, there are over 6,000 public and private schools in Florida with dozens of them sharing similar names.

To reconcile multiple school names found in the U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA reports, a framework was utilized to determine a reasonable match. School names listed on the U.S. Department of Education reports were compared with a listing of all public and private school names provided by the Florida Department of

Education. In cases where school names failed to match, these schools are not included in the Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard.

### Schools missing from the Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard

The Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard exists to allow users to track progress of schools as well as make accurate and reasonable comparisons using FAFSA completion data collected over the past two years. With this in mind, the following schools were omitted from the Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard:

- All private schools
- Schools identified as “Virtual” as their school setting (example: public virtual schools and virtual instruction programs)
- Public schools with fewer than twenty 12<sup>th</sup> graders attending during the 2014-15 and/or 2015-16 school year
- Public schools with no enrollment data available
- Schools listed on U.S. Department of Education FAFSA reports whose names were determined too ambiguous to assign a match (example: USDOE school name “First Coast” in Jacksonville could not be matched with another school because there are three schools in Jacksonville with 12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled that share the words “First Coast” in their name)
- Schools identified as primarily serving adult students

### Limitations and other considerations

Limitations to consider while viewing the data is the age of students, both in terms of those completing FAFSAs and those listed as “12<sup>th</sup> graders.” The U.S. Department of Education defines a high school senior as an applicant no older than 18 submitting an original application who will have received his or her high school diploma and who will be considered a college freshman by the start of the school year to which he or she is applying for aid. This means that applications from students older than 18 are not represented in their reports. In addition to this, when the Florida Department of Education collects K-12 survey data, schools are instructed to include demographic information from students ages 0-21. This limitation may suppress FAFSA completion rates for schools enrolling 12<sup>th</sup> grade students ages 19-21 that would be included in enrollment counts but not FAFSA completion counts.

Because filing a FAFSA requires a valid social security number, students without social security numbers are unable to complete a FAFSA. In Florida, [students are not required](#) to submit a social security number to enroll in public schools, so it is unknown how many 12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in a particular school are unable to complete a FAFSA. For this reason, some schools with high migrant or international student enrollments *may* have lower FAFSA completion rates compared to other schools.

Another limitation of the data are possible changes in enrollment during each school year. Florida Department of Education 12<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment counts included on the dashboard may not reflect changes in enrollment taking place over time due to student migration, attrition or other causes. Because FAFSA completion counts *do* reflect counts recorded over time, FAFSA completion rates may not be accurate.

A school’s FAFSA completion rate may also be influenced by their high school graduation rate. Because a high school diploma or recognized equivalent [is an eligibility requirement](#) for completing a FAFSA, schools with more 12<sup>th</sup> graders graduating have the potential to attain higher FAFSA completion rates (and vice versa). For this reason, each school’s [federal high school graduation rate](#) is included to consider when viewing the data.

The U.S. Department of Education indicates schools with students completing between 1 and 5 FAFSAs with a “<5” designator. Schools with <5 FAFSAs completed have no FAFSA completion rate calculated because it is impossible to determine the precise number of FAFSAs that were completed, but do appear on the Florida FAFSA Finish Line data dashboard. Schools with “>5” FAFSAs completed have “\*\*\*” indicated for their FAFSA completion rate due to the masked data.

For these reasons, school-level FAFSA completion rates may not be precise.

To learn more about the FAFSA completion rates found in the U.S. Department of Education’s reports, including the methodology used, data details, assumptions and frequently asked questions, please follow this [link](#).

## Key of Terms and Indicators Used on the Florida FAFSA Finish Line Dashboard

**\*\*:** Fields on the data dashboard where there are masked data to protect student privacy are indicated using two asterisks -- \*\*.

**5% Goal:** To promote the need for increasing FAFSA completion in Florida, the Florida College Access Network issued a challenge for all schools and districts to increase FAFSA completion rates by 5% compared to last year’s performance through March 2015.

**# of 12<sup>th</sup> Graders:** Number of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in each Florida public school. Enrollments for the 2015-16 school year reflect Florida Department of Education Survey 2 data as of 12/21/15. Enrollments for the 2014-15 school year reflect Survey 2 data as of 12/21/14.

**College Going Rate:** Percent of 2012 graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution within 16 months of graduating (includes National Student Clearinghouse counts).

**Completed FAFSA:** A completed FAFSA is necessary to determine eligibility for federal (and other) sources of financial aid. When a student submits the application with requirements missing, it is rejected by the U.S. Department of Education’s Central Processing System at which time students are notified of actions required to complete it. U.S. Department of Education includes school data on FAFSA submissions in its reports, but they are not included as a part of the dashboard.

**County/District FAFSA Completion Rate:** The county/district FAFSA completion rate *is not* an aggregate of all FAFSAs completed and all students enrolled at a particular county/district. Limitations of both state and federal data sets permit a true FAFSA completion rate for counties and districts to be calculated. To control for limitations that exist within the state and federal data sets, below is a summary of FCAN’s methodology for calculating county/district level FAFSA completion rates:

**FAFSAs completed at all schools**

(excluding adult schools, virtual schools and schools with fewer than 20 12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled)

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**12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled at all schools**

(excluding adult schools, virtual schools and schools with fewer than 20 12<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled)

**= District/County FAFSA Completion Rate**

Other notes: In Florida, county boundaries serve as the designation for school district boundaries with few exceptions. Schools belonging to special school districts (ex. PK Yonge Developmental Research School in

Gainesville), are listed with other schools located in their geographic location but are not included in district total calculations. Special districts (ex. PK Yonge) are included in state totals.

**FAFSA Completion Rate: 2014-15:** Percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at each school who have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid for the 2015-16 application cycle during the 2014-15 school year.

**FAFSA Completion Rate: 2015-16:** Percentage of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at each school who have completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid for the 2016-17 application cycle during the 2015-16 school year.

**High School Graduation Rate:** Each school's federal, four-year cohort graduation rate which includes standard diplomas and excludes GEDs. To learn more about this indicator, read [this report](#) published by the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Education Information & Accountability Services.

**Free/Reduced Price Lunch Rate (Low-income Students):** Percentage of students enrolled at each Florida public school eligible for a free- or reduced-price lunch. To learn more about this indicator, read [this report](#) published by the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Education Information & Accountability Services.

**Magnet Status:** School's status regarding magnet criteria. Schools are either identified as Magnet School, Magnet Program or Not Applicable.

**Magnet Specialty:** Type of magnet program at the school. Types of programs that exist are Academically Talented, Criminal Justice, Foreign Language, International Baccalaureate, Medical, Performing Arts, Science/Math, Technology and Other.

**Primary Service Type:** Indicates the main educational program offered at each school with the following definitions:

- Adult Education – basic or supplemental instruction designed for the adult population
- Alternative Education – education delivered via an alternative education delivery system to a specially designated student population
- Regular Education – regular or basic instruction
- Special Education – modified education programs for students identified as exceptional education students
- Technical Education – education specifically designed to assist the student in obtaining specific job skills

**School Charter Status:** Refers to a school's indicated charter school status with the following statutory definitions:

- Charter – Regular charter school (under s. 1002.33, F.S.)
- Conversion Charter – Conversion charter school (under s. 1002.33, F.S.)
- Non-charter – not a charter school

**School City, County and Zip Code:** Relates to the physical location of each school (not mailing address or assigned school district).

**School Grade:** A-F grade earned based upon the School Accountability Report. Visit the official [Florida School Grades website](#) for more information on the determination of school grades and the state's differentiated accountability system.

**School Name:** Full school name provided by the Florida Department of Education.

**School Size:** This is a Florida College Access Network indicator based on a school's number of 12<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled (see **# of 12<sup>th</sup> Graders**). Small schools have 20 to 165 12<sup>th</sup> graders, medium schools have 166 to 415 and large schools have 416 or more.

**Virtual Schools:** Florida has many state and district virtual education options, and thus has students attending virtual schools who complete the FAFSA and plan to attend postsecondary institutions. Because the U.S. Department of Education relies on student reported data on the high school they are attending, there can be some difficulty in correctly attributing FAFSA completion data to a specific virtual school. Because of this, FAFSA completion data from students attending virtual schools are omitted from the FAFSA Finish Line dashboard and not counted in district or state totals. To view FAFSA completion data for virtual schools in Florida, visit the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Federal Student Aid's FAFSA [data portal on the web](#), as well as the Florida Department of Education's [landing page for virtual education options](#).

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The Florida College Access Network's mission is to create and strengthen a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to improve college & career preparation, access, and completion for all students. Our Big Goal is to increase the proportion of working-age adults in Florida who hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential to 60% by the year 2025.

