

Financial Aid Starts with FAFSA

FAFSA Fast Facts:

- FAFSA = Free Application for Federal Student Aid...It's FREE
- Complete online at www.fafsa.gov
- Only need to submit one FAFSA for all colleges
- Gateway to financial aid – all federal aid is determined through FAFSA, but state and institutional (colleges/universities) aid can also be awarded based on FAFSA
- Money is disbursed on a first come, first serve basis – it's important to file early!
- No "deadline," but families are encouraged to complete the FAFSA by March 1 to be eligible for State Aid
- FAFSA for 2018 – 2019 is available October 1, 2017!
- Students and families will be able to use Prior-Prior year (2016) tax information starting Oct 1, 2017

FSA ID – Your start to filing the FAFSA!

- The FSA ID is a username and password system that allows students/parents to electronically file and complete the FAFSA form
- The FSA ID replaced the FAFSA PIN for all students/parents/borrowers in May 2015
- Students and one of their parents/guardians will need to create, individually, a FSA ID (The parent/guardian needs an FSA ID and the student needs their own FSA ID too)
 - A different email address is needed for each FSA ID
 - All communication from the US Department of Education will go directly to the email associated with a FSA ID
- **Get your FSA ID as soon as possible:** www.fsaid.ed.gov

What Information is needed for the FAFSA? *Directly from www.studentaid.ed.gov*

- Your Social Security number (it's important that you enter it correctly on the FAFSA!)
- Your parents' Social Security numbers if you are a dependent student (most students are)
- Your driver's license number if you have one
- Your Alien Registration number if you are not a U.S. citizen
- Federal 2016 tax information or tax returns for you and your parents
- Records of your untaxed income, such as child support received, interest income, and veterans non-education benefits, for you, and for your parents if you are a dependent student
- Information on cash; savings and checking account balances; investments, including stocks and bonds and real estate but not including the home in which you live; and business and farm assets for you, and for your parents if you are a dependent student
- If at all possible, use the IRS data retrieval tool when completing the FAFSA it will auto fill a large portion of the financial information on the FAFSA. You will be asked if you want to use it in the financial portion when you are completing the FAFSA. When using the IRS data retrieval tool, it is important to complete the mini "pop up" version of your tax return exactly as it appears on your actual 2016 tax return.

Who is considered an independent student? *Directly from www.studentaid.ed.gov*

An independent student is one of the following: at least 24 years old, married, a graduate or professional student, a veteran, a member of the armed forces, an orphan, a ward of the court, or someone with legal dependents other than a spouse, an emancipated minor or someone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Common Errors on the FAFSA *as written by Mike Pugh on Fastweb.com*

- Use the 1040 federal tax return for income reporting and reporting taxes paid. Some parents and students mistakenly use their W-2 form.
- If student's parents are divorced, the parent the student lived with the most during the past calendar year should be the parent whose income and tax information is reported. Make sure students include step-parent's information.
- Students should include themselves in the household size.
- As with all forms and applications, make sure you read the instructions and questions carefully.
- If you're unclear about a question or are having trouble filling out the FAFSA, check the FAQ section on the FAFSA website, or call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243), or visit a local financial aid event.

Local Financial Aid/FAFSA Events

- Check with your guidance counselor at your High School to find out about FREE financial aid help night at your school and other FAFSA help in your area.
- Many questions can be answered about the FAFSA on www.fafsa.gov
- Additionally, if you need assistance completing your FAFSA, you can make an appointment with Jana Reenders from the Tri-Cities College Access Network. She will have appointment times during the day between 8:30 and 2pm at Spring Lake High School on Mondays and Grand Haven High School on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays starting October 23 through November and then as needed after that. She can assist you in the FAFSA process if you need help. Contact her by email at jreenders@springlakeschools.org or janareenders63@gmail.com for appointments. It is difficult to answer financial questions and complete the FAFSA by email so, appointments are required