



ISAC
FAFSA
SYMPOSIUM

Engaging Students & Families in Financial Aid Application Completion

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Overview

- **Context:** Belvidere, IL; District 100; Belvidere High School (BHS); BHS Student Services Team
- **Last year's efforts and insights:** What did we do? What worked? Where could we experience the most growth?
- **This year's action plan:** What do we want to get right this year? How do we get there?

BHS and Belvidere, IL

- Belvidere, IL
 - “City of Murals”
 - Population: 25,181 people
- District 100
 - Serves about 8000 students
 - Three high schools, two middle, six elementary
- Belvidere High School
 - Total enrollment: 1,224
 - 48% Hispanic; 45.5% White; 2.9% Two or More; 2.2% Black



Student Services Team

- Six counselors
 - One for EL and refusals
 - One for proficiency recovery (current focus is on at-risk seniors)
 - Four- alpha split caseload
 - One part timer for maternity leave
- Two social workers
- One school psychologist
- One secretary/registrar



Year in Review: Efforts & Insights

- What did we do?
- What worked?
- Where could we experience the most growth?

What did we do?

We planned and collaborated.

- *Began at the end of 2020-2021 school year*
- Weekly team meeting
- Connected with ISAC
 - Assigned rep
 - School Services support
- Determined curriculum
 - Events, classroom lessons, individual meetings
- Established data tracking methods
 - GAP uploads
 - Completion spreadsheet

What did we do?

Determined curriculum

Events, classroom lessons, individual meetings

- **September 2021**
 - Individual senior meetings
 - First generation college group meetings
 - Financial Aid Presentation (for seniors)
- **October 2021**
 - Continued individual senior meetings
 - Continued first generation college group meetings
 - Two Financial Aid Application Completion workshops
- **November 2021**
 - Continued first generation college group meetings
 - Freshmen classroom presentations
- **January 2022**
 - Individual junior meetings
- **February 2022**
 - Continued individual junior meetings
 - Continued first generation college group meetings
 - Junior classroom presentations

What did we do?

Determined curriculum

Events, classroom lessons, individual meetings

- **March 2022**
 - Continued individual junior meetings
- **April 2022**
 - Financial Aid Presentation (for juniors)
 - Financial Aid Award Letter Night
 - First generation college group (class of 2023)
 - Focus group for seniors missing FAFSA grad requirement
- **May 2022**
 - Continued first generation college group meetings (class of 2023)
 - Celebration with class of 2022 first generation college group
 - Pushed into senior classrooms
- **Other happenings throughout the year:**
 - Meetings with students as needed
 - Individual meetings with ISAC rep
 - College and University visits
 - ISAC rep pushing into classrooms

What did we do?

We planned and collaborated.

- *Began at the end of 2020-2021 school year*
- Weekly team meeting
- Connected with ISAC
 - Assigned rep
 - School Services support
- Determined curriculum
 - Events, classroom lessons, individual meetings
- Established data tracking methods
 - GAP uploads
 - Completion spreadsheet

What did we do?

Established data-tracking methods

GAP upload, completion spreadsheet

- **GAP upload**
 - Pull data from SIS (eSchool)
 - Upload into GAP
 - Make sure you can access GAP
 - Accuracy checks throughout the year
 - Collab with ISAC rep
- **Completion spreadsheet**
 - Shared with counselors
 - Standing agenda item at weekly counselor meeting
 - Determine plan

Completion List
Demo

What did we do?

Discussion: Educating, validating, and making things accessible

- For many families, the financial aid application process can be daunting for many reasons
 - Never went to college/first generation college student
 - Undocumented (student and/or parents)
 - Unique financial situations
- Be sure to create a safe environment
 - Alternative Application
 - Sensitive information
- Access for Spanish speakers

What did we do?

**We communicated
and implemented.**

Communication

- Financial aid application graduation requirement
 - Individual meetings
 - Postcard mailed home
 - Classroom and group lessons
 - [Email to parents](#)
- Marketed events
 - Word of mouth
 - Email to students and parents
 - Social media
 - Parent newsletter
 - Classroom and group lessons
 - [Student Services website](#)

What did we do?

**We communicated
and implemented.**

Implementation

- Co-hosted events with ISAC and RVC
 - Bilingual support
 - Extra chromebooks
- In-person and virtual options
 - Flexible for Fall 2021
- Collaborated with teachers for classroom lessons and in general
 - EL Department
- Team accountability for individual and group meetings

What did we do?

We tracked data.

Quantitative

- Financial aid application completion
 - Weekly GAP check
 - Constant collaboration with ISAC
- Events
 - Registration form
 - Sign-in sheet
- Individual meetings
 - Seniors
 - Juniors

What did we do?

We tracked data.

Qualitative

- Reflection with BHS team
- Feedback from students and families
- Input from administration, teachers, other stakeholders

Professional Development

- FAFSA Symposium
- FAFSA Certification Training
- PaCE and Financial Aid & Literacy

What did we do?

We planned and collaborated.

We communicated and implemented.

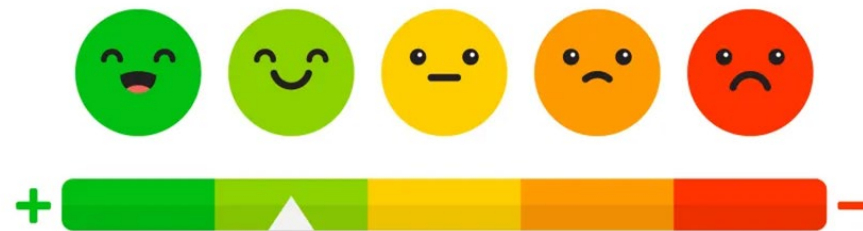
We tracked data.

Both a linear and nonlinear process

Constant feedback loop

What worked?

- **Having a close relationship with ISAC rep**
- Constantly communicating with each other and all stakeholders
- Making our events accessible for our Spanish-speaking students and families
- Creating a safe environment for students to get support in completing the Alternative Application
- Tracking financial aid application completion and creating an action plan to increase the numbers



Where could we experience the most growth?

- Doing more with financial literacy for sophomores
 - Kind of in the works with career pathway endorsements
 - Provided ISAC rep info to teachers so that they could connect for curriculum; no follow up on our end
- Getting more people to our events
 - Decent numbers from the registration forms
 - Few would show up for events
 - Communication? Timing? Product of the pandemic?
- Technology
 - Should have partnered with District Tech team earlier
 - Access to Alt App during workshops
 - GAP issues



Looking Ahead: Action Plan for This Year

- What do we want to get right this year?
- How do we get there?

What do we want to get right this year?

We want to see more **intentionality and integrity** from students with financial aid application completion.

We want to **see more people** at the events that we co-host.

We want to continue **meeting the needs** of all our students, especially those who are marginalized.

How do we get there?

We want to see more **intentionality and integrity** from students with financial aid application completion

- Adjusting senior letters to include 'Graduation Commitment' and verbiage about financial aid application completion
- Providing more opportunities for students to get direct help
 - ISAC Office Hours
- Collaborating with teachers to integrate financial aid literacy (especially to sophomores)
- Continuing with some key events
 - Senior meetings
 - FAPs (especially to juniors)

How do we get there?

We want to see more people at the events that we co-host.

- Majority of the actions listed in previous slide (because we hope to help them realize the impact that these events could have on them)
- Continue communication with all stakeholders about upcoming events
- Creating a feedback form per event to send to anyone in attendance
- Trying out some different days for events
 - Give Mondays a shot (historically have done Tuesdays and Thursdays)
 - ISAC office hours during school day (if evenings are not an option)

How do we get there?

We want to continue **meeting the needs of all our students, especially those who are marginalized.**

- Counselors will continue to seek professional development
- First generation college group
 - Resuming class of 2023 meetings this month
 - Begin class of 2024 meetings in Spring 2022
- Offer bilingual support for Spanish speakers at events
- Ensure transgender students know their options
- Collaboration with EL department
- Continue staying on top of completion spreadsheet



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Thank you!

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

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