FAFSA Completion Portal

Frequently Asked Questions

The FAFSA Completion Portal is a data tracking tool that was created by the Washington Student Achievement Council to assist school and eligible non-profit personnel in better assisting Washington public high school students in completing their FAFSA applications.

Contents

What information populates the FAFSA Completion Portal?

Information in the FAFSA Completion Portal comes from Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and the United States Department of Education. The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) has data sharing agreements (DSA) with both entities which allow us to track and share certain pieces of information (within the DSA guidelines). OSPI provides a list of seniors based on expected graduation year who are currently enrolled in Washington schools that are overseen by OSPI. The Department of Education provides FAFSA information for applications wherein students are either attending Washington high schools or are planning to enroll in a Washington postsecondary institution (according to their FAFSA).

How frequently is the FAFSA Completion Portal updated?

The senior list data received from OSPI is refreshed weekly. The FAFSA applications that have been processed are received on a nightly basis through an automated data transfer process.

How can I get access to the FAFSA Completion Portal?

You can get access to the FAFSA Completion Portal by contacting fafsa@wsac.wa,gov and sending an email with your name, work email, work phone number, school(s) you are associated with, and district. FAFSA Completion Portal access is granted for staff who are working directly with students to support them with their individual FAFSA applications. WSAC staff will then check to see if the district has a current data sharing agreement (DSA). If the district does have an active DSA, they will send you a non-disclosure agreement form that will need to be signed by you and your supervisor. Once signed and received by WSAC staff, portal access will be established and an activation link will be sent to you by email if you do not already have an existing portal account due to access in another portal program (e.g., College Bound).

What can I do if my district does not have a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) with WSAC?

If you are interested in setting up a data sharing agreement (DSA) with WSAC, please reach out at fafsa@wsac.wa.gov. WSAC staff can walk you through any questions you have and the required information. Those interested in setting up WSAC FAFSA Completion Portal DSAs are recommended to discuss the benefits of portal access with their superintendents as they will be the signatories in these agreements.

My student completed their FAFSA and is still being marked as "not submitted." What is occurring?

There are a variety of situations that may be occurring, but there are typically a few things that need to be checked. Often, the student's legal name on the FAFSA does not match the name on the OSPI list from CEDARS. Another common occurrence is the student enters an incorrect application year on the FAFSA. They should be completing the application for the year following their graduation year. A portal user can identify issues in their specific situation. If there are further questions, please contact fafsa@wsac.wa.gov and WSAC staff will assist to identify the issue.

What happens if I have a student whose address is not in Washington, but is still on my senior list?

An important aspect to the data received is that we only receive data for applications where the student has WA listed as address/residence and/or if they have put a WA institution as one of the institutions to receive the FAFSA application data. Some students may appear in your school list who are outside of the WA address/residence criteria, such as if the students live across the state border or who may be in a military family where they have listed another state as residence. This means WSAC will only receive the application data if the students list at least one WA institution on their FAFSA application. WSAC cannot force a FAFSA match or mark as "complete" in the system without FAFSA application data present.

How are students matched to the appropriate FAFSA?

Students are matched in the FAFSA Completion Portal based on the shared information received from OSPI and the Department of Education. The matching criteria utilized include first name, last name, high school, zip code, and birthdate. The system matches based on the probability that a specific FAFSA belongs to one of the students on the OSPI senior sist. If there is a high enough probability, their FAFSA is automatically changed to either "completed" or "submitted, but incomplete" in the "Comp Status" field on the FAFSA Completion Portal student list. If there is not enough of a probable match and yet some key fields are shared, then it is possible the student will be left as "not submitted" and a number will appear in the "Match" field to signify that the student has one or more possible matches to be reviewed. A Portal user can check in the "View details" to see if that lower probable match is indeed one that can be matched for the student.

Can non-profit personnel access the FAFSA Completion Portal?

Non-profit organization personnel can access the FAFSA Completion Portal if they serve all seniors at a particular school rather than a subset of students and if they are working directly with students to support them in their FAFSA applications. This is due in part to the data sharing agreement WSAC has with the Department of Education. The Department of Education shares FAFSA information to ensure FAFSA completion rates are increasing. This is why organizations must serve all seniors, not only a subset. A data sharing agreement will need to be set up with the non-profit organization and WSAC will also work to verify the schools that are being supported directly per US Department of Education data sharing regulations. When the non-profit reaches out, WSAC will ask for a list of school staff who will be emailed to see if the non-profit is supporting their senior class students.

If you are only working with a subset of students at your school, instead of using the FAFSA Completion Portal, you may benefit from some of our public-facing data to assist you with program management and improvement—visit the public dashboard at [Washington State FAFSA Completion Dashboard | Tableau Public](#).

Why is my student not showing up in the FAFSA Completion Portal?

There are two common reasons a student does not show up in the FAFSA Completion Portal. The most common reason is they have an expected graduation year different from the current academic year. This is common because students often take more or less time than expected to graduate high school.

The other common reason is the student is not listed as currently enrolled in your school according to OSPI. This does not happen very often, but it is possible early in the academic year as some districts do not report enrollment information until late October.

WSAC cannot add the student as information is received weekly and any changes may be overwritten with the new weekly file. If you think the student should be on your list and is not showing up due to enrollment, please contact your district CEDARS data administrator to see what can be done.

When should I expect the new year to be live on the FAFSA Completion Portal?

Since the FAFSA application for the following academic year opens on October 1, the FAFSA Completion Portal will begin to populate with data in mid-to-late October. This is partially due to making sure the portal is matching the fields correctly; and partially due to CEDARS continuing to receive enrollment information during this time frame.

Is there a way for me to match the student in my list if I know they completed the FAFSA application?

The only way a Portal user can match a student is if there is a number in the "Match" column of the FAFSA Completion Portal student list. If you click on "View Details," you will be able to then click on "View the Possible Match". In this scenario, you can choose either "Yes" or "No". If a number does not show up in the "Match" column, the system did not locate an application with at least a 10% probability of being a match.

Is there a way to read the errors the student has on the FAFSA Completion Portal?

WSAC does receive the FAFSA applications from the Department of Education, but the organization cannot share this information as it would be a breach of the data sharing agreement guidelines. Instead, it is encouraged that portal users work with the students and check the student's FAFSA account to see what errors are listed. You can go into the "My activity" section and then move to the "Student Summary" section. You will find red exclamation marks in the sections with errors.

Is there a way to change a student's name on the FAFSA Completion Portal Student List?

There is no way to change a student's name on the FAFSA Completion Portal Student List. This information comes from OSPI on a weekly basis and would overwrite any changes. Instead, a student and portal user can work together to identify if they would like the preferred name changed in CEDARS and can contact the CEDARS district data administrator for assistance with that. It is important to note this is a data tracking tool and will not impact student eligibility for aid.

Why is my school not appearing on the FAFSA Completion Dashboard for HS Seniors?

Public aggregate FAFSA completion data can be found on Washington State FAFSA Completion Dashboard | Tableau Public, although it will be suppressed data. Your school or district may be not appearing if it is suppressed due to class sizes lower than 20.

Why is my student who completed WASFA not showing up?

WASFA applicants are not included in the FAFSA Completion Portal to ensure WASFA applicants' privacy.

Will not matching in the FAFSA Completion Portal impact my student receiving College Bound funds or other financial aid?

The FAFSA Completion Portal is used solely for data tracking and will not impact the students' chances of receiving College Bound funds or other financial aid. WSAC worked with qualifying institutions to ensure any student that fulfills the FAFSA completion aspect of the CBS Pledge can still get the aid if it is needed. Financial aid offices of those schools which have been listed in the FAFSA application can match students to their applications with their Social Security number.

Is there any way to look at previous years to see how many students completed their FAFSA?

If a Portal user is interested in delving into some of the past data, they can use a variety of resources, such as WSAC Portal - FAFSA Completion Initiative (wa.gov) or the student list. By changing the "School Year" field to a previous year, a portal user can see how many students were listed with each "Comp Status" value. You can also see rate over time listed on the Washington State FAFSA Completion Dashboard | Tableau Public which can help to see how the rates appeared throughout the school year.

Why are the FAFSA Completion tables on the FAFSA Completion Portal showing numbers of completers different than my student list?

The FAFSA Completion tables showcase the statistics as of that Monday. A WSAC statistics job is run on those days. Thus, you may have some discrepancies if you have gotten new matches throughout the week and the most accurate data would be the student list.

Are there resources that would assist me in improving the FAFSA completion rate at my school?

There are many resources online. Also, there are resources available specifically in Washington. One reason that is found at WSAC is the 12th Year Campaign | WSAC (wa.gov). They have valuable information related to FAFSA completion and inform high school staff across the state. Another resource is the College Success Foundation which partners with schools across the state to ensure underserved and low-income students can achieve their dream of a college education. They can be reached at info@wcan.org.

What should I include if I use the Give Feedback tool in the FAFSA Completion Portal?

If you have questions about a specific student, it is recommended that you provide information to assist the WSAC staff in finding the specific student record you are concerned about. This button opens an email message for fafsa@wsac.wa.gov directly.

Who should I contact if I have more questions about the FAFSA Completion Portal?

Questions about the FAFSA Completion Portal can be sent to fafsa@wsac.wa.gov.