



**PRACTICE
SHIFTS**



**PROGRESS
INDICATORS**



**MILESTONE
RESULTS**

LEARNING BRIEF: **Financial Aid → Enrollment**

Working together in new ways to help students complete financial aid applications

Rising costs of education, housing, and living have made it increasingly difficult for many students in Marin to continue their learning journey after high school. Indeed, it is a well-established fact that students are far more likely to enroll in a post-secondary program if they've submitted a financial aid application while in high school; accordingly, many states have now begun to mandate this as a high school graduation requirement and California is beginning to take notice.

Between tax forms, overlapping deadlines, and bureaucratic jargon, financial aid applications are tough for any student to complete. Add to that, language barriers, a mistrust of sharing information with the government, and stereotypes associated with needing financial assistance in "wealthy Marin," and the barrier to successfully applying for financial aid gets even higher. Unfortunately, it is often the students who need the most financial aid that have the least support navigating the system.

This is why the **Enrollment Action Team** has prioritized Financial Aid form completion as a vital step in increasing post-secondary program enrollment. To do this the Team has identified and implemented several collaborative practice shifts. These shifts have resulted in Marin students submitting more financial aid applications than ever before, and it's starting to pay off as the enrollment gap begins to close.



PRACTICE SHIFTS

Working together as a cross-sector team to embed financial aid application support during the school day

High school College & Career Specialists typically work part-time to support all students' college advising, financial aid, and career exploration needs. To augment these services many students rely on support from community based organizations. However, in looking at the data, this Team realized that about half of the population they were focused on did not have access to a support program due to a variety of reasons such as work, transportation, or needing to care for family members.

After analysing the data and considering all the various factors, the Team developed a collaborative strategy wherein the partner high schools would dedicate time during the school day to financial aid support services, and the nonprofit program partners would, as a team, bring their culturally responsive financial aid expertise to each campus to help any student, not just their program participants. Through a facilitated three year continuous improvement process the team refined its activities and their sequence into the following:

- Fall Financial Aid Train-the-trainer program: Led by College of Marin and 10,000 Degrees
- Financial Aid Rally Weeks: Coordinated by 10,000, Hosted by schools, Supported by Team
All School Assembly → Parent Night → Student Workshops in Econ/Gov Classes
- One-on-one pull-outs to ensure form completion (see next page)



PRACTICE SHIFTS

Shared, student-level data = Efficient one-on-one pullout support

By working with the Partnership’s Backbone Staff to access, share, and report out on California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) financial aid form completion data, schools and community partners can more accurately identify which students have yet to complete their applications. Through this efficient coordination process, time that was once wasted following up with students who had already completed the forms is now dedicated to helping other students. And, partners can make mid-year adjustments to their process in order to ensure that all students receive help from at least one of the partnering organizations or a school counselor. With this real-time, reliable data, more students are receiving the support they need to complete their financial aid applications and continue their education after high school.

SMALL CHANGES



BIG IMPACT

When partners realized that some immigrant parents were hesitant to bring tax information to parent workshops, they started providing shredders at the sessions. Knowing that their private information would stay private, parents were more likely to bring in the tax forms and complete their part of the application process. Students were then able to spend less time tracking down their parent’s tax information and more time completing applications which resulted in more students reaching the completion finish line.



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

70-85%
APPLICATION
COMPLETION RATES

Financial Aid Form Completion Rates
In the 2018-19 school year, financial aid submission rates among students in the six demographic focus categories, were as high as 85%. These categories included: Low Income, English Learner, First Generation, Foster or Homeless, African American or Hispanic/Latino, or Counselor Identified. (Focus students at district high schools 2018-19)

18% pt
INCREASE

Increase in Financial Aid Form Completion
Since 2016, the team has seen an increase in financial aid forms submitted by students of color and low-income students in San Rafael and Novato School Districts, with the most dramatic percentage increase (67% - 85%) seen for students at Novato High School. (Novato High School 2016-2019)

College &
Career
Program
Enrollment



MILESTONE RESULTS

Because of the correlation between financial aid and college enrollment, the Action Team expects to see enrollment gaps close even further over the coming years. Notably, the Enrollment Action team has seen both the racial and income gaps narrow by 11% since 2013 - a definitive sign that these process shifts are making a difference.



Marin Promise Partnership is a cross-sector network of school districts, community members and nonprofit organizations working together to ensure that all children can reach their full educational potential, regardless of race, ethnicity or income. Using the nationally acclaimed StriveTogether collective impact framework, the Partners have promised to close Marin’s educational equity gaps by 2028.