

Counselor's Puzzle-Solving Toolkit

A Game Plan for Piecing Together a Successful Financial Aid Event



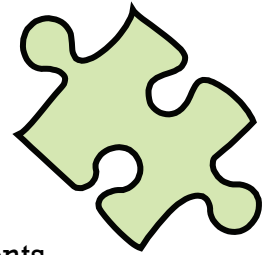
Toolkit includes:

- **Checklist for planning a financial aid night**
- **Sample letter to parents**
- **Sample news releases**
- **Suggested intercom/email announcements**
- **Sample donation request letter**
- **Flyer to post on bulletin boards**
- **Resources**

Checklist



Select the date. Remember to take into account the school calendar and possible conflicts. If you are using an outside speaker, make sure they are available. Consider the deadlines for applications and provide the information in a timely manner. Be sure to allow time to publicize the event.



Select the time. Consider whether you want the parents to go home and have dinner first or if they are more likely to attend straight from work. Also, let them know how long the program will last.



Set the location. Select an area on campus that is easy to find, is large enough to hold your anticipated crowd, and has AV capabilities.



Provide door prizes or food. If you can offer pizza or something simple, this is a great way to increase your attendance. If your town has a favorite place that garners a lot of business from your school, contact them and ask for either a discount or donation. Offering door prizes can also increase attendance, and they can be obtained through donations from local businesses. Collect door prizes well in advance so you can advertise. If you have a local bank that will give a \$100 or \$200 scholarship at your event, this can provide a real boost in attendance and in scholarship applications – sometimes it only takes one or two students winning a scholarship to get other students motivated.



Promote the event.

- Send news release to local newspaper(s)
- Have an article in the school paper
- Include in daily school announcements
- Send letters to parents
- Post flyers around campus (expand to retail outlets if possible)
- Send email announcements
- Promote via the school's website
- Ask teachers to add a note to their online pages
- Have a poster or video contest for art and drama students (winning video shown at the event and posted on YouTube; winning poster announced and used at event)

Sample letter to parents (juniors/seniors)

Dear Parents,

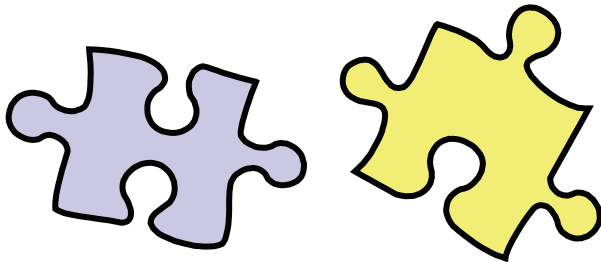
If you think that the last few years have flown, you will be amazed at how fast the junior and senior years will go by! Your student has spent over a decade preparing for a single important event – Graduation Day.

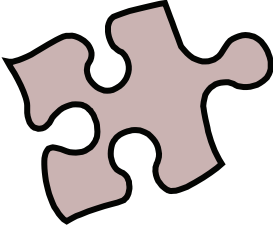
To assist you and your student in taking the next important step in their lives, we will be hosting a FREE Financial Aid Night on (insert date). We will be covering topics such as the college application process, how to apply for financial aid (grants, loans, and scholarships such as the **Arkansas Academic Challenge [Lottery] Scholarship**), the steps that are involved when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and how to evaluate college offers, as well as a timeline for the entire process.

A representative from (insert organization) will be available to provide you with this valuable information and answer your questions.

We look forward to seeing you: **(Date)**
(Time)
(Place)

(insert Counselor name or just the school signature)





Sample News Release – Local Paper

Contact: (Name, School, Phone Number and or email address)

(School Name) Offers Free Financial Aid Night for Students and Parents

(Name of School) will host a free Financial Aid Night on (date, time) at the school's (location). All high school students and their parents are invited to attend. Information provided will focus on the college application process, scholarships, and funding a higher education.

Students and parents will learn how and when to apply for federal and state student aid. Information will also be provided about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Arkansas Academic Challenge (Lottery) Scholarship. A representative from (insert info) will be available to answer questions about financial aid and paying for college.

Questions about the free Financial Aid Night may be addressed to (Name) at (phone number or email address).

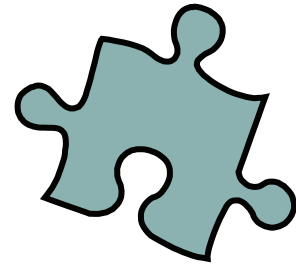
Article for School Newspaper or Website

Puzzled about your future? Puzzled about how you are going to pay for college? Are you having trouble finding all the necessary pieces to get you started? Finding the corner pieces and getting the straight answers can put you on the right track for solving the puzzle. We will be hosting a Financial Aid Night (on date, at time/place) where you will learn about :

- Applying for federal financial aid
- Applying for state grants and scholarships
- Completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Evaluating college offers
- Planning for the future

Now is the time to start putting the pieces of your puzzle together!

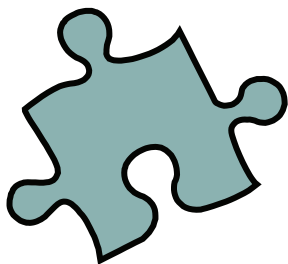
ANNOUNCEMENTS



Suggestions for intercom and/or email announcements to students

- ◆ Puzzled about money for college? On (date, time, place) a representative from (insert info) will be here to visit with you about solving the puzzle. Learn about your options.
- ◆ Are you puzzled about financial aid? Learn what you need to know to put the puzzle together at the Financial Aid Night (insert date, time, place). A (insert title or representative of organization) will be on hand to answer your questions and help you sort through the pieces.
- ◆ Searching for money for college? There is money available! Come to the Financial Aid Night (date, time and place) to hear about applying for your share of the money!
- ◆ Have you heard the phrase “Show Me the Money?” Attend the Financial Aid Night (date, time , place) to learn about the money and aid available for college.
- ◆ Are your parents hounding you about college applications, and applying for scholarships? Bring them to our Financial Aid Night on (date, time and place). A representative from (organization) will be available to answer their questions.
- ◆ There is more to getting ready for college than just applying. Learn the rest of the story! On (date, time, place) come learn about financial aid and what is available if you’ll only apply!
- ◆ Deadlines, applications, admissions, scholarships – all these words are pieces of the puzzle you need to put together. A representative of (organization) will be available on (insert date, time, place) to assist you with putting your puzzle together. Attend the Financial Aid Night and see how the pieces fit!
- ◆ Note – If you are offering food or door prizes, you can add this line to the above announcements:

We will serve (insert type of food) beginning at (time). We will draw for door prizes during the program, so be on time to register!



Sample letter for requesting donations

Dear _____:

We all realize the value of a college education and the high cost of financing that education. Recent reports show higher education costs increasing at a tremendous rate. There are billions of dollars available for college, and it is a matter of informing our students and their parents about how to apply for this money. Last year, our students received (\$dollars) in scholarships and free aid, and we hope to increase the amount this year.

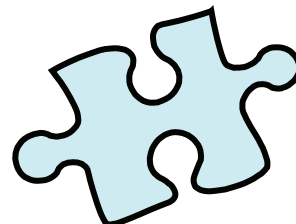
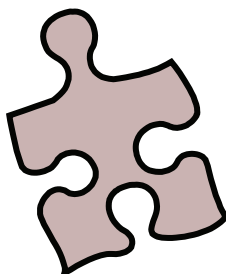
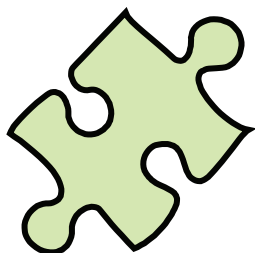
(High school) is offering a free Financial Aid Night on (date). The purpose is to provide the parents and students with the information they need to begin the process of solving the puzzle of paying for college.

We are asking for your assistance. We would like to have a drawing for door prizes at this event. Whether you would like to donate a item that can be used when a student goes away to college or a gift card for a free meal, all donations will be appreciated.

If you are willing to donate a door prize, or if you have questions, please give me a call at (add phone #).

Donations must be received by (date).

Name
School



Resources for Financial Aid Night Speakers

TEAMM SLGFA – Provides experienced financial aid presenters. Send an e-mail to teamm@slgfa.org to request assistance.

Arkansas Department of Higher Education – Provides information on what the State of Arkansas has to offer in the way of scholarships and grants. Visit www.adhe.edu for details.

College Financial Aid Office - The staff at college financial aid offices may be willing to present information at financial aid nights. Ask for some assistance by contacting a financial aid administrator at the college or university nearest you.

Resource Publications

- **Cash for College** – A brochure perfect for financial aid nights, created by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA)
- **Applying for Financial Aid 2012-2013** – A step-by-step instruction guide for completing the FAFSA
- **Don't Get Hooked** – A scholarship scam prevention poster

Contact TEAMM SLGFA at teamm@slgfa.org to request any of the above publications.

Internet Resources

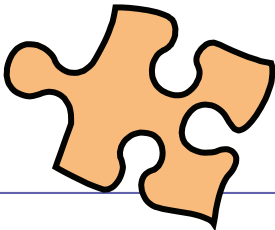
Mappingyourfuture.org – Contains career information, financial aid terms/ acronyms, information on completing the FAFSA, and a timeline for parents and students. Also has a good interactive program – [Guide to Life after High School](#).

SLGFA.org – Provides career guidance, information about planning and paying for a higher education and helpful links including free scholarship searches.

ADHE.edu (Arkansas Department of Higher Education) – Details state aid programs and houses the YOUiversal Application, a requirement when applying for any of the state scholarships or grants.

StudentAid.ed.gov – Provides information about federal student aid programs.

Scholarship searches:

- ◆ fastweb.com
 - ◆ fundmyfuture.info
 - ◆ scholarships.com
 - ◆ scholarshipexperts.com
 - ◆ scholarshipmonkey.com
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FINANCIAL AID EVENT

Are you puzzled about
how to pay for college?

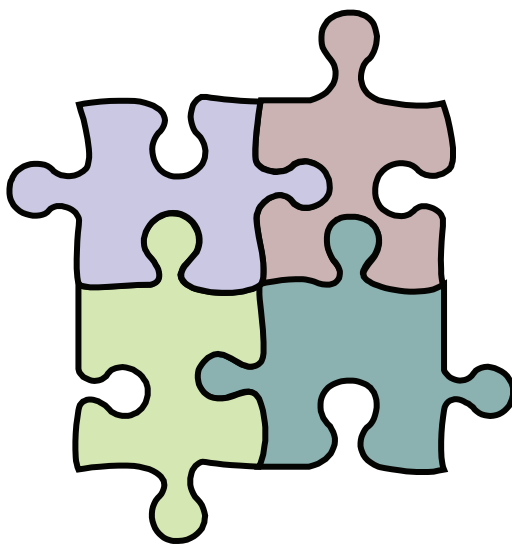


Attend this free financial aid event
and put all the pieces together.

Date & Time:

Location:





Provided by:



slgfa.org

facebook.com/slgfa

youtube.com/teammslgfa