

# Senior “Launch” Guide – Ideas for Maximizing its Benefit

June 2018

*The ways in which the Senior Launch Guide, created by AZ GEAR UP, has been used, described below, come from one year of experience with “The Guide”. Our hope is that educators, students and parents continue to provide us feedback on the ways in which the Guide has been, or could best be, used to help high school seniors successfully transition to life after graduation. Any ideas provided in such feedback will be added to this document next year.*

## SECTION 1 – CHECKLISTS

**Counselors** used the postsecondary plan checklists during one-on-one meetings with seniors. During these meetings, students confirmed their plans for after high school and the Counselor then went over the relevant checklist in the *Guide*, pointing out the timeframe and deadlines for actions required to reach their goal.

**Parents** kept a copy of the checklist relevant for their senior’s plan posted in an accessible and visible place at home (on the refrigerator, for example), then checked in with their senior regularly on progress, marking the dates that each step is accomplished.

**Advisory Teachers and Senior Capstone Teachers** used the *Guide* throughout the year, having students check deadlines on the checklist relevant for their plan, and fill in dates when steps were completed.

## SECTION 2 – COLLECTING PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Advisory Teachers and Senior Capstone Teachers** who used the *Guide* throughout the year, dedicated two class periods, early in the year, to having students fill out the Personal Information form, to facilitate the scholarship and college applications they were to complete later in the year. Students referenced their transcripts to fill out other portions of this form. Many students did not know their SSN so finding that was assigned as homework.

## SECTION 2 – SELECTING A BEST FIT COLLEGE

**Advisory Teachers and Senior Capstone Teachers** who used the *Guide* throughout the year, facilitated discussions about college-fit, helping students understand there are many different aspects to the college experience and that all of those aspects impact the students’ experience. After reviewing the various factors listed in the *Guide*, they had students identify what aspects were most important to them, then go on-line (either during the class period or assigned as homework) and look at colleges they were thinking of attending, including their local community college, to see how it ‘measured up’ against what was important to them.

**Counselors** worked one on one with students who were unsure about which college to attend, using the information in the *Guide*, to help students figure out which college would likely be the best fit for them.

## SECTION 2 – TRACKING COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

**Advisory Teachers and Senior Capstone Teachers** who used the *Guide* throughout the year, had students track the status of their college applications in the *Guide*, and checked the status regularly to ensure students met the deadlines for each piece of the application.

**Parents** posted this page of the *Guide* in an accessible and visible place (like on the refrigerator) and checked regularly to make sure their senior was moving forward with applications as expected.

## SECTION 2 – TAKING OR RE-TAKING COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

**Counselors** used this information in the *Guide* to help advise students who were unsure about whether they should re-take the ACT or SAT.

## SECTION 2 – YOU’RE ACCEPTED...NOW WHAT?

**Advisory Teachers and Senior Capstone Teachers** who used the *Guide* throughout the year, used this page after students were accepted and had decided which college to attend, to help ensure students were aware of the final steps that needed to be taken to complete their enrollment, and to the extent possible, before the end of the school year, had students complete and track some of those steps.

**Parents** posted this page of the *Guide* in an accessible and visible place (like on the refrigerator) after their senior had been accepted to college, to make sure they completed each post-acceptance step required.

## SECTION 3 – PRE-FAFSA INFORMATION FORM; FSA ID FORM

**Economics Class teachers** assigned the Pre-FAFSA Information as homework in preparation for FSA ID and FAFSA workshops facilitated by counselors, financial aid reps from the local community college and the Econ teachers.

**Advisory Teachers and Capstone Teachers** who used the *Guide* throughout the year, had students fill-in the Pre-FAFSA Information page prior to FSA ID and FAFSA completion workshops the school had scheduled.

**Administrators** used the list in the call-out box at the bottom of the Pre-FAFSA Information page to inform parents (via text messages, flyers and FB posts) of items students and parents should bring to scheduled FAFSA workshops.

**Counselors** facilitated workshops during the school day to help students create their FSA IDs. Counselors had students complete the FSA ID Form in the *Guide* during these workshops as they were applying for their FSA ID. Subsequently, students were asked to have the FSA ID Form with them when completing the FAFSA during in-class and evening workshops. The FSA ID Form helped students remember their FSA ID, even though many of them had created their FSA ID months ahead of completing the FAFSA.

**Counselors** printed copies of the FAFSA and FSA ID pages for students who said their parents were confused or they have questions. These counselors attached their office number and highlighted the [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov) website callout on page 30. One counselor commented, *“I love how simply it is laid out and makes it [the FAFSA] seem doable.”*

## SECTION 3 – WHAT IS MY DEPENDENCY STATUS

**Counselors, teachers, administrators, and community volunteers** who assisted during large FAFSA Completion events, referenced the “What is my Dependency Status” page in the *Guide* to help students, individually, determine whether they needed to provide parent information on the FAFSA.

### SECTION 3 – SAR INFORMATION & SAMPLE SAR

**Counselors** used the Sample SAR page in the *Guide* during financial literacy workshops with students and families. Counselors reviewed information on the process to complete a FAFSA, and then showed the sample SAR to parents, explained why it was important and, reviewed how to read and understand it.

**Advisory Teachers and Senior Capstone Teachers** who used the *Guide* throughout the year, used the SAR information and sample SAR to help students understand their own SARs.

### SECTION 3 – FINANCIAL AID AWARD LETTERS

**Counselors, Advisory Teachers, and Senior Capstone Teachers** made classroom presentations using this page, to help seniors understand their own Financial Aid Award letters/offers.

### SECTION 4 – ESSAYS & PERSONAL STATEMENTS

**Senior English Teachers, Advisory Teachers, and Senior Capstone Teachers** included writing a personal statement/essay as a classroom assignment for a grade and credit. Some had the students research scholarships and select a specific, actual scholarship that required an essay, to apply to. These teachers founds pages 39-41 helpful for preparing students for these assignments.

### SECTION 6 – RESUMES AND COVER LETTERS

**CTE and Life Skills Teachers** used this section to facilitate class periods focused on how to write a compelling cover letter and create an outstanding resume, then had students create resumes and cover letters as assignments, for a grade and credit.

### OVERALL

One district obtained a grant to have the *Guide* professionally printed and spiral bound for use in Senior Capstone Classes throughout the year. Students received a grade in this class. The Guides were kept in the classroom, but students could also take them home. One teacher commented, *"I'd like to permanently replace most of the senior capstone with these because everything is all in one place, the forms are much more detailed and professional."* Econ/Capstone Teacher