



COLLEGE APPLICATION & EXPLORATION MONTH

MIDDLE SCHOOL RESOURCE GUIDE



College Application and Exploration Month Coordinators,

On behalf of College for West Virginia (CFWV), thank you for registering to host College Application and Exploration Month at your school. The celebration in West Virginia is set for the month of October, but celebrations across the country will happen throughout the fall.

If you need to extend your week, please feel free to do so. However, for our tracking purposes, we ask that all schools conclude College Application and Exploration Month activities by **Friday, November 6**, and **submit the mandatory post-event survey by January 15, 2027**.

College Application and Exploration Month is a shared opportunity for all West Virginia students to explore and prepare for postsecondary opportunities. When we say, “college,” we consider that any form of high-quality education or training after high school. This includes trade and professional certificate programs, career and technical programs, two- and four-year degree programs, formalized apprenticeship programs, and military service.

We believe every West Virginian should pursue a college pathway. Fewer than one-third of West Virginians have an associate degree or higher, yet 60 percent of working-aged West Virginians will need a degree to meet future workforce demands.

We’re a long way from our state’s goal to have 60 percent of our residents complete postsecondary education. That’s why we are proud to host a statewide celebration that encourages students to research and discover the postsecondary pathway that is right for them. We are thrilled you have agreed to join the campaign.

Please find enclosed materials to help you host your College Application and Exploration Month events. Many additional resources, such as guided curricula and financial aid handouts, can be found online at the new CFWV.com. Let us know how else we can help you.

Thank you again for your dedication to helping our students pursue and succeed in postsecondary education. We really appreciate your commitment to this important initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt Turner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Matt Turner
Executive Vice Chancellor for Administration

College Application and Exploration Month provides assistance during the regular school day to help students explore college, training programs, apprenticeships, and military pathways that best meet their needs. Students in middle school will utilize the month to explore careers, training programs, and colleges while also learning about the beginning of the application process during the monthlong celebration. The involvement of your entire school; students, faculty, staff, and families, will add to the college-going culture in your community.

College Application and Exploration Month will focus on the following goals:

1. Providing an opportunity for all West Virginia high school students to prepare for postsecondary education, and
2. Assisting all students in exploring careers and postsecondary opportunities.
3. Providing an opportunity for students to learn about the application process early in their middle school years.

This is an exciting month for everyone! The possibilities are endless! With proper planning, creativity, collaboration, event promotion, and fantastic implementation of the resources CFWV provides you, College Application Exploration Month will help prepare your students for life during and after high school while setting them up for continued and future success!

This toolkit has been provided for you as a guide. Please feel free to adapt the resources as you need for your school and community. Tailor these events to meet the needs of your students and school. A special thanks to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and American College Application Campaign for providing CFWV with ideas and resources to revamp our College Application and Exploration Month materials.

Requirements for Participation

1. Though this is NOT a participation requirement, we do suggest completing the online CFWV College-Going Culture Assessment Survey. This assessment tool can help you evaluate your school community's level of maturity when it comes to developing a strong college-going culture. There are no official "grades" or "scores." Additionally, this information will help WVHEPC follow regional and county data trends. The survey may be found here:
[College-Going Culture Survey](#)
2. Provide computer lab time to allow 12th grade (or adult) students to explore college options and submit college applications. Seventh through 11th-grade students can explore career and college options using the state's free college-planning website, CFWV.com. Students younger than 7th grade can complete other college and career awareness activities. If schools/classes are meeting virtually, students can complete these tasks virtually from their school-issued devices.
3. Host one or more school-wide activities to increase awareness of the importance of planning for education and training beyond high school. If schools/classes are meeting virtually, instructors will be provided with alternate activities or make accommodations to existing activities found within the toolkit that can be completed at home.
4. Complete the required site coordinator survey (after the event), which allows CFWV to evaluate the event's impact.

Post-event Survey

Note: The required post-event survey will be emailed to site coordinators Monday, November 2, 2026, immediately following College Application and Exploration Month.

Site Coordinator Checklist

- ✓ Reserve space for activities, including computer lab space for students to research colleges and careers, submit applications, and other online activities.
- ✓ Add CAEM activities to the school calendar.
- ✓ Promote CAEM on social media, with signage, school announcements, and messaging to families.
- ✓ Distribute event preparation materials to faculty, staff, and students.
- ✓ Considering adding a shortcut to computer lab desktops pointing to CFWV.com at www.cfwv.com for easy access during CAEM.
- ✓ Review this guide, the online resources at CFWV Connect, and any other college exploration materials you may have to prepare for the month.
- ✓ Complete the college-going culture survey if you have not yet done so. You can access the survey at College-Going Culture Survey.
- ✓ Recruit any additional volunteers or guest speakers from your school or community to help make the event special. Consider involving community groups such as the PTA/O, 4-H groups, girl/boy scout troops, faith-based leaders, employees, and college representatives.
- ✓ If students have not yet created CFWV accounts, consider having them create them a head of time. You can view a quick video to help with account creation at CFWV Account Creation..
- ✓ Create a detailed schedule of the week to provide the faculty and staff. Send a final all-call reminder to students, families, and teachers preparing them for the monthlong celebration!
- ✓ Check out the detailed curricula on CFWV's Connect page. English, Social Studies, and STEM middle school and high school lessons are available for use.
- ✓ Work with your counseling team to determine which seniors still need to apply to college.
- ✓ Create a social media campaign that tells your CAEM story.
- ✓ Include College facts or other-college focused announcements during your morning announcements or social media platforms.
- ✓ Decorate the school with college themes.
- ✓ Take pictures and post on your social pages using the #CollegeBoundWV
- ✓ Complete the post-event survey.
- ✓ Send thank you notes to all of your volunteers.
- ✓ Celebrate your students who applied to college.
- ✓ Celebrate your students who explored career and college opportunities.

Engaging the community in the planning and implementation process will create excitement about the event. Additionally, the community plays an important role in creating and sustaining a college-going culture.

Ideas for Engaging Elementary/Middle School Students

- Ask older students to visit the classrooms of younger students to share a college fact.
- Invite students to serve as “guest announcers” during morning or evening announcements. Have them read a college- or career-related fact over the intercom.
- In the weeks leading up to the event, encourage students to draw, paint, or create college- or career-themed artwork that you can use to decorate classroom doors or hallway walls during the event.
- Add a pin to the postsecondary map provided for those who registered early.
- Invite student clubs and teams to help promote the event. You might host a contest between clubs or classes to see who can design the best college-planning bulletin board, or ask your school’s cheerleading or spirit squad to create college-themed posters and banners.

Teachers

- Share your planning calendar with them and ask for their help in brainstorming ways to make this event something the whole school embraces.
- Ask teachers to incorporate college-planning and exploration activities into their classes leading up to College Application and Exploration Month. Examples of ways to include college-exploration activities within class time are included throughout this manual.
- Encourage English, Social Studies, and STEM teachers to consider using lessons from the CFVW English and Social Studies curricula (available for download on the education and outreach tab of CFVW.com) during the month.
- Encourage teachers to decorate their classrooms and doors with college pennants, posters, and information. Use the “Ask me about college” activity included in this kit.
- With the principal’s permission, ask teachers to wear their favorite college gear during College Application and Exploration Month. You may want to designate a particular day as “College Colors Day,” and encourage the whole school to get involved.



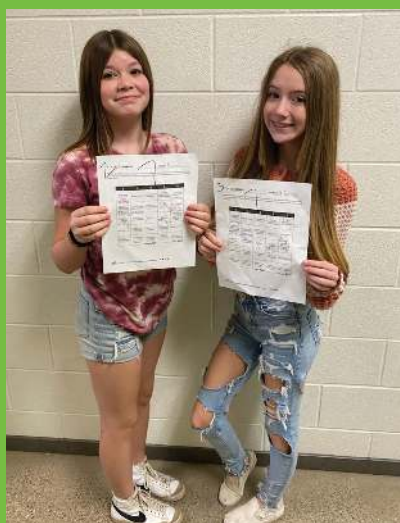
School Staff and Support Personnel

- Encourage your school staff, including custodians, cooks, administrative assistants, and bus drivers to wear college gear.
- Ask staff members to post signs and information about College Application and Exploration Month on their doors, desks, or throughout their work areas.
- Encourage staff members to talk to students about the event, and to ask students questions. For example, a cafeteria worker could ask each student who passes through the lunch line what college he or she might want to attend when they get older.

Volunteers and Community Representatives

- Invite parents or community leaders to visit classrooms and talk about their college experience and their careers. Recruit parents to help decorate the school.
- Invite local businesses to hang up the “Ask me about my college” signs in their storefronts.
- Brainstorm ways other groups can get involved or integrate college messaging or planning into their activities with students. Groups to consider include:
 - the PTA/O and the School Improvement Council Retired educators
 - Community service, senior citizen, or church groups College and university representatives and faculty Business, community, and political leaders
 - Youth programs (e.g. YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, 4-H, Girl and Boy Scouts)
 - School alumni

Note: Depending on your district's policy, you may need to conduct a background check for individuals volunteering at the school



An Overview for Teachers, Staff, and Community Supporters

October is West Virginia's statewide College Application and Exploration Month! To ensure that our event is a success, we need your help promoting this event -- and making sure our initiative is exciting and fun for West Virginia's students!

What is College Application and Exploration Month?

College Application and Exploration Month is an event coordinated by College for West Virginia (CFWV) and the American College Application Campaign. Schools and community organizations across West Virginia will celebrate during the month of October!

What is the Goal of College Application and Exploration Month?

Our goal is to help all students learn more about college opportunities and to complete the steps necessary to pursue training and credentialing beyond the high school degree.

What Happens During College Application and Exploration Month?

Think of this month as a spirit month, during which we all work together to build excitement and awareness surrounding the college exploration process. We will provide information about college to students, but the event can become truly spectacular if we integrate fun activities into our school and community environments. For example, we can decorate our doors and classrooms in college themes, post signs and pennants in our community storefronts, have college trivia contests -- let's get creative!

How Can I Help?

You can help by assisting students in exploring colleges and careers, contributing to the "spirit" of the month by wearing your favorite college gear, or -- perhaps most importantly -- reaching out to students to encourage them to explore colleges and careers. Seek out those students in your neighborhood who might traditionally be underserved or overlooked when it comes to college planning, or those adults in your life who might be interested in returning to the classroom. Use this as an opportunity to talk to them about their options for college!

You can also support the effort online by sharing your college experience using the hashtag #WhyIChose. Inspire others by sharing why you chose the school or program you completed, or what you love about your alma mater! Be sure to mention @CFWV so that your message can be shared statewide.

