

The Basics of Financial Aid

There are **three forms of financial aid: grant, loan, and work study**. A grant is a gift of money, and does not have to be paid back. A loan must be paid back. And work study is an on-campus job.

There are **three main sources of financial aid: the college you attend; thousands of scholarships available nationwide that are applied for individually; and Bedford-based scholarships**.

1. By far, most financial aid comes from the college you attend. The federal government funnels financial aid to students through each college.
 - **No matter what college you end up attending, to access that college's financial aid, you must fill out a free federal government form, the FAFSA.** The FAFSA must be submitted **after** January 1. The federal government strongly encourages applicants to complete the form online because it will be processed much more quickly. To access the application, go to www.fafsa.gov. This is a task for parents. This form is used to calculate what is called the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Colleges make a decision on financial aid for you based on that figure. **Many colleges are not able to meet all your financial need.** The aid you receive could be any combination of grant, loan, and work study.
 - **On Financial Aid Night at Bedford High, historically in October, there is a detailed explanation of how to fill out the FAFSA.**
 - You must apply for Financial Aid separately at each college you apply to, using each college's own financial aid application. You must read each college's instructions and follow them carefully and completely, including making all deadlines.
 - A small number of colleges, mainly the most competitive, require families to fill out a second form, the College Board's Profile, the **CSS Financial Aid Profile**. Go to www.profileonline.collegeboard.com. This form costs a fixed amount per college and is filled out online.
2. Lists of scholarships available nationwide can be obtained online. Check elsewhere on our Guidance web site for suggested web sites and also in Naviance.
 - You can find scholarships this way, but must be willing to apply time and effort to the process. Pay attention to deadlines. Often, the student must write an essay. Try to find scholarships that somehow do not apply a large number of people, to increase the student's chances of success, for example, "students whose parent works at a particular company."
2. Bedford-based scholarships.
 - **Citizens' Scholarship Foundation (CSF)**, a non-school, non-profit nationally affiliated group staffed completely by local citizens volunteering their time, raises and distributes about \$75,000 each year to Bedford students. The Guidance Department distributes the CSF scholarship packet to all

seniors on a date in early spring. It is due back one month later. The awarding of scholarships is based on need and merit. The CSF committee tries to award scholarships to as many students as possible. **Apply for this scholarship. Don't miss out on a chance to obtain a small grant that will help with the first year of college.**

- **Cambridge Savings Bank** offers, each year, one \$2500 scholarship to a BHS student attending a four year college, and one \$2500 scholarship to a BHS student attending a two year college. The Guidance Department works with Cambridge Savings Bank on this scholarship, but the bank chooses the two recipients. We typically distribute this scholarship application in February.

3. Loans from other sources.

- MEFA Counselor is a web resource designed specifically for high school students, their parents, and school counselors to access credible online information about college planning, applying for financial aid, and paying for college.
- Explanation of some terms:
 - Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) - funds come from a bank, credit union, or other lender that participates in the program.
 - Direct Loans - funds for the loan come directly from the federal government.
 - PLUS Loans - parent loans that can be borrowed through the FFEL program or the Direct Loan program.
 - Subsidized vs Unsubsidized Loans:
 - Subsidized loans - the government will pay the interest on your loan while the student is enrolled in college and for the first six months after school has ended.
 - Unsubsidized loans - the student is responsible for paying the interest on the loan from the first day it is dispersed.