



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

September 9, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: The 2017–2018 FAFSA: Changes for an Earlier and Easier Process

In an effort to make the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application process simpler for students, the federal government is offering two big changes to the 2017–2018 FAFSA process.

1. **Students can submit the 2017–2018 FAFSA earlier.** In the past, students had to wait until January but now they can submit it a full three months earlier on October 1, 2016. The earlier date will allow families to complete the application closer to the time the college application process begins instead of waiting until tax season.
2. **Allow the use of earlier income and tax information.** For the 2017–2018 FAFSA, students (and parents) must report their 2015 income and tax information rather than their 2016 income and tax information. This makes it easier because most people will have already filed their 2015 taxes, and they may be able to use the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Data Retrieval Tool to automatically import their tax information into the FAFSA.

The Federal Government believes these steps will reduce the time it takes to complete the FAFSA by two-thirds to 20 minutes, and enable millions of students to better plan for and pay for college. For resources specific to the 2017–2018 FAFSA, including a tool kit, educators and parents can visit the [2017-18 FAFSA Page](#).

If you have questions contact Joseph Wharff, School Counseling Specialist, by telephone at (804) 225-3370, or by email at Joseph.Wharff@doe.virginia.gov.

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