



Communicating With Parents

What do parents want to know about NAF academies?

General Questions

Q: What is NAF?

- A. NAF is a national leader in career-connected education that expands access to real-world learning opportunities for high school students. For 46 years, NAF has transformed the high school experience by introducing students to real careers, industry professionals, and pathways to upward mobility.

Q: What does NAF do?

- A. NAF partners with local school districts, industry and community partners to transform the high school experience by introducing students to real careers, industry professionals, and pathways to upward mobility.

NAF bridges the gap between learning and the workplace through career-connected curriculum and work-based learning, equipping students with practical skills, helping them discover their interests, and connecting classroom learning to future careers—especially for students who may lack exposure to professional networks.

Q: What does it mean to be part of a NAF academy?

- A. When a student joins a NAF academy, they become part of a network of more than 110,000 students across the country taking part in an educational experience designed to support students as they aim to reach their full potential. NAF students have the opportunity to learn about possible career paths available to them and begin to build the skills needed to succeed while still in high school. NAF academies operate as small learning communities, which enables more personalization and stronger connections. Advisory board members are dedicated to supporting the academy and organizing activities to prepare students for college and career. NAF students also have a network of students and alumni available to them.

Q: What makes NAF different than programs my local high school offers?

- A. The NAF design fits within your school's traditional educational experience. It's not just one experience or one course. Students in NAF academies participate in career-connected courses and work-based learning activities that reflect the business world throughout their high school years, with schoolwork and activities becoming increasingly more focused and practical as students approach graduation. Through this continuous learning process, students graduate with a career path in mind and have the knowledge and connections to pave their way to achieving their goals.

Q: How can I get involved in supporting my child's NAF academy?

- A. NAF academies benefit from parental/guardian involvement in a number of ways. NAF parents/guardians are encouraged to volunteer to participate in work-based learning activities and even sit on advisory boards. In addition, family members can sign up to receive our family newsletter for additional resources that can be used to support your student's academy journey.

Curriculum Questions

Q: How do schools select a pathway?

- A. NAF's pathways are focused on viable industries in which job growth projections are high. Academies select their pathways based on the needs, support, and opportunities in their local community. NAF offers five core pathways in finance, hospitality & tourism, information technology, engineering and health sciences. While NAF provides specific resources for these core pathways, NAF also supports all pathways aligned with National Career Clusters Framework.

Q: What kind of coursework is taught in NAF academies?

- A. The NAF curricula is created in partnership with industry professionals and designed around projects that help students make connections across subject areas, acquire valuable workplace skills, and view their education as a step toward long-term career options. Projects have real-world application as they resemble work environment projects. NAF also approves external curricula that align with individual academy, district, and state requirements and pathway needs.

Q: Does participating in a NAF academy interfere with regular academic requirements?

- A. No, typically NAF courses take the place of elective courses. NAF promotes cross-curricular integration, so NAF courses actually enrich regular requirements with real-world application.

Q: Is NAF an extracurricular activity?

- A. NAF is not an extracurricular activity. NAF is embedded into your child's daily school routine. Your child will continue to take traditional courses alongside NAF's career-connected elective courses. Your child will participate in work-based learning activities both inside and outside of the classroom during the school day.

Q: Can my child still participate in extracurricular activities and sports?

- A. Yes, NAF does not interfere with extracurricular activities and sports.

Q: Will my child still have time to participate in extracurricular activities or will the time requirements/rigor of the NAF academy prohibit my child from doing so?

- A. Every child is different. It is up to the parent/guardian to help their child prioritize and manage their time should they feel like they are taking on too much.

Q: Does NAF force a student to choose a career or college major before graduating?

- A. No. NAF helps guide students to make informed decisions about their future career and college studies. Oftentimes students even learn what they don't want to do. The NAF experience can provide a student with the needed inspiration and it can help a student eliminate options that he or she is not interested in.

Q: Will work-based learning activities take away from my child's academic experience?

- A. No. Work-based learning activities actually enrich a child's academic experience. Most activities happen during the school day and provide students with a realistic application of lessons learned through their coursework.

Logistics Questions

Q: What does it cost to join a NAF academy?

- A. There is no cost to join a NAF academy. NAF is included as an option in your school/district. The school/district pays a nominal membership fee to NAF.

Q: How does my child get enrolled in the academy?

- A. If your child is interested in joining a NAF academy, contact your school. The enrollment process is different at every school. It is likely that a career and technical education director or a guidance counselor can help you enroll.

Q: Are there special requirements for joining the academy?

- A. There are no special requirements for joining a NAF academy other than having an interest to do so. NAF promotes open enrollment for its academies.

Q: NAF is not at the schools in my area, how can I change that?

- A. If there aren't any NAF academies in your district, contact your district and encourage them to consider applying. If you have a contact with your district that you think would be open to learning about NAF and you'd like a representative from NAF to speak to them, contact us through naf.org/contact.

There are also additional ways for students to benefit from NAF programming. KnoPro is a free project-based learning platform that is open to all students. KnoPro partners with major companies to create project-based challenges that students can participate in for a chance to win cash prizes. The platform, and the challenges, provide opportunities for students to build skills on their own schedule. Visit knopro.org to see our latest challenges.

Outcomes and Benefits Questions

Q: What opportunities are available to students in a NAF academy?

- A. Opportunities may vary depending on academy, but generally speaking, NAF students participate in work-based learning activities such as work site tours, career conversations, college tours, and more as part of their academy experience. In addition, NAF students may have opportunities to participate in challenges, attend and present at events and meetings, earn certifications, gain college credit through dual enrollment programs, and may qualify for scholarships.

Q: What's the benefit of being in a NAF academy? What do NAF academy students get that non-NAF students don't get?

- A. Through NAF, students have many unique opportunities beyond what a typical high school student may have. Students participate in a series of work-based learning activities that give them access to expertise from business professionals, exposure to work environments, and opportunities to hone their professional skills. NAF students participate in activities that help build their resume, foster their network, and develop their future ready skills. In the classroom, students participate in career-connected courses and complete projects that are relative to the working world.

Q: Is there evidence that participating in a NAF academy has positive results for students?

- A. Yes. NAF's national senior graduation rate is 99%, 89% plan to go to college and 11% plan to go straight to work or to the military. Many students will work while going to college. NAF alumni attend over 2,000 higher education institutions. 77% of NAF students indicated that they built career skills and that they gained confidence in their career skills as a result of work-based learning. When NAF compared program alumni against similar non-NAF peers in the same district, we found that NAF alumni who completed NAF's program of study, an internship, or both, enrolled in college within two years at higher rates than non-NAF peers.

Q: How will participating in a NAF academy prepare my child for success in a career?

- A. NAF academies expose students to career options while they are still in high school through career-connected curriculum, work-based learning activities, and connections with business professionals. Students learn about career pathways through career awareness and exploration activities like career fairs, mock interviews, and job shadows and begin to prepare for careers by building the skills needed to succeed. They also gain knowledge in what higher educational opportunities would align with their career goals. NAF students graduate with transferable skills, confidence, and a sense of direction.
[View this video of a recent NAF graduate sharing his story.](#)

Q: Will being in a NAF academy help my child get into college?

- A. Yes. From being able to list specific career courses that may align with college majors, to including work-based learning experiences and internships on applications, to earning

college credits through dual enrollment programs and certifications while still in high school, your child's resume and college applications will stand out from the rest.

Q: Do NAF academies help students in the college application process?

- A. NAF is all about future readiness, no matter the path your child chooses. If college is decision, many NAF academies provide assistance with college applications, the FAFSA, and choosing the right college. NAF students participate in college level work, and many NAF academies have relationships with higher education institutions that help to facilitate college tours.

Q: Will being in a NAF academy help my child get scholarships?

- A. Being in a NAF academy may help your child obtain scholarships. NAF offers several scholarships to NAF seniors each year, and many scholarship opportunities aligned with NAF's career pathways exist. NAF students have stronger resumes rich with career-connected courses and work-based learning experiences that stand out when they apply for scholarships.

Q: What are the long-term benefits for my child?

- A. NAF alumni often earn more in their careers and have better ties to their communities than their peers. In addition, by staying connected to the NAF alumni network, NAF graduates gain access to exclusive alumni opportunities at all levels of their careers including learning opportunities through webinars and live events, speaking and storytelling opportunities, volunteer opportunities, and more.