Piecemeal Approach to Paying for Higher Education

October 30, 2026

PRESENTED BY

Karin Parsons, Education Affordability and Financial Wellness Counselor
Jessica Whittier, Education Affordability and Financial Wellness Counselor

Agenda

- Understanding the Affordability Challenge
- What is the Piecemeal Approach?
- The Pieces of the Pie
  - Savings
  - Grants and Scholarships
  - Student Employment
  - Payment Plans
  - Tax Benefits
  - Strategic Borrowing
- Supporting Students and Families
- Comparing options
- Resources and next steps

Cost of Attendance

- There is more than one cost that goes into the college bill.
- It makes sense that there would be more than one funding source.

- Tuition
- Fees
- Housing
- Meals
- Books
- Supplies
- Deodorant!

The Piecemeal Approach to Paying for Education

The more pieces a family brings to the table, the more options they have.



Savings



- Provides flexibility
- Reduces borrowing
- Has little or no effect on financial aid eligibility

Possible sources:

- 529 plans
- Family savings
- Gifts from relatives
- Student savings

- $2000 in savings = $2000 less in borrowing

Grants

- Federal Pell Grant
- State grants
- Alfond Grant
- Institutional grants



- The Pell Grant and Maine State grant are determined by filing the FAFSA

Scholarships

- Merit scholarships
- Local scholarships
- Employer-sponsored scholarships
- Community organizations
- Private scholarship searches

Student Employment

Working Before and During College

- Reduces borrowing
- Builds skills, resume
- Creates ownership

Examples:

- Summer jobs
- Part-time employment
- Federal Work-Study

- Dependent students can earn $12,000/year and it will not impact FA eligibility



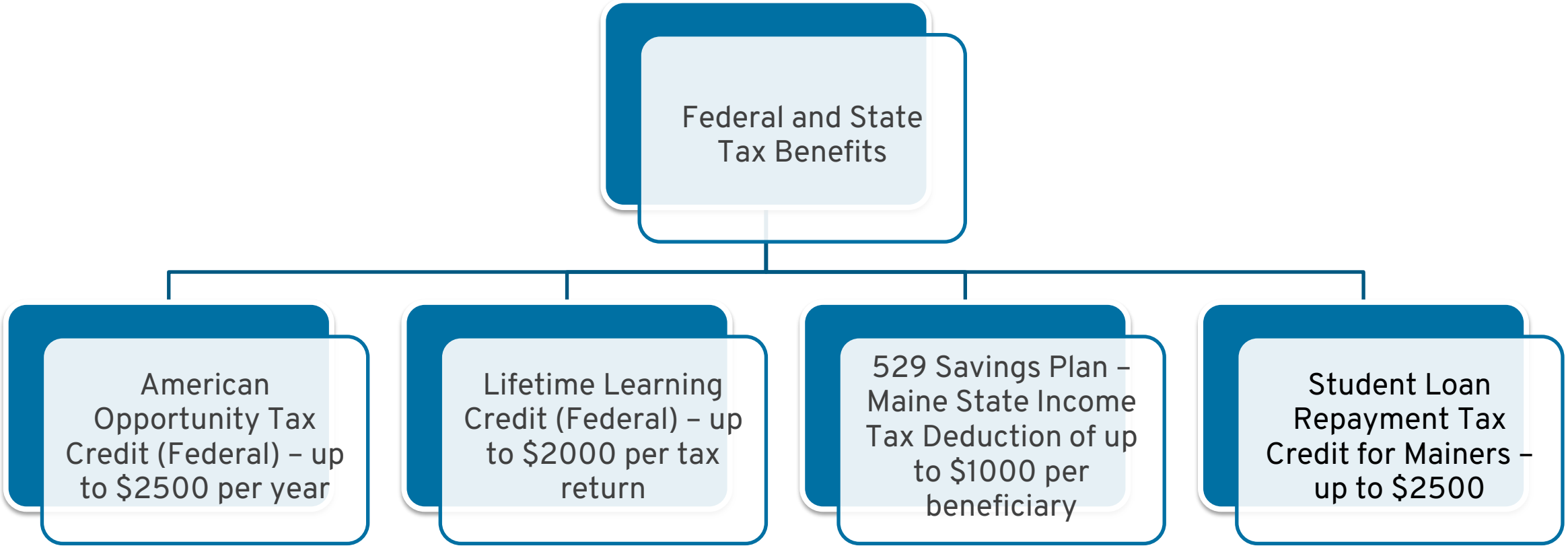
Payment Plans

Payment Plans Break Costs into Monthly Payments

Benefits:

- Often little or no interest
- Easier budgeting
- Reduces borrowing needs
- Example: $4,000 balance = approximately $400/month over 10 months

Tax Benefits



Strategic Borrowing

Informed borrowing

- Federal Direct Student Loans first
- Borrow conservatively, what is needed
- Consider future income
- Manageable repayment
- Student Loan/ Salary Calculators



Conversations about Affordability

We are not financial planners.

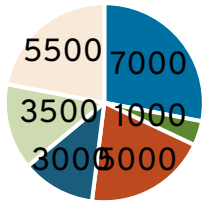
What we CAN do:

- ✅ Encourage early conversations
- ✅ Promote FAFSA completion
- ✅ Help students identify realistic options
- ✅ Challenge affordability myths
- ✅ Refer families to experts when needed

What role can school professionals play in conversations about affordability?

Meet Emma

Emma's cost of attendance $25000



- Pell Grant
- Scholarship
- Savings
- Summer job
- Payment Plan

