REACH HIGHER

College Signing Day Toolkit

REACH HIGHER | BETTER MAKE ROOM | THE COMMON APPLICATION

Reach Higher & Better Make Room

REACH HIGHER

Reach Higher, an initiative started by former First Lady Michelle Obama during her time at the White House, is centered around providing encouragement and activating educators, counselors, and other adults to help young people see college as an option, whether at a traditional four-year university, a two-year community college, through an industry-recognized training program, or through the military.

BETTER MAKE ROOM

Better Make Room is the student-facing campaign supporting Reach Higher, giving young people a space to declare their commitment to their future and engage with others. It's a peer-to-peer encouragement model that speaks to students in their own language—because they're the ones doing the talking. Better Make Room aims to elevate students and says to the world, "These young people are about to do something great. We Better Make Room."

Together, these initiatives create a community around higher education, giving students—and the adults in their lives—the support they need to succeed.

Reach Higher & The Common Application

In 2019, Reach Higher joined Common App. Common App is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to access, equity, and integrity in the college admissions process. Their members include more than 800 diverse colleges and universities across 20 countries. Each year, more than 1 million students, a third of whom are first-generation, apply to college using Common App's free online Common App's free online application system.

A Message from Michelle Obama

I am thrilled to know you are hosting a College Signing Day program in your community. These events offer a unique opportunity to celebrate graduating seniors, showcase our student leaders, and inspire more young people to take the first steps on their journey to higher education.

We launched Reach Higher at a College Signing Day because we wanted to recognize students and put them and their academic accomplishments first. One of my greatest joys is learning of these remarkable young people across the country who are taking charge of their future and committing to higher education.

I hope this toolkit will provide you with a range of resources and ideas to make your College Signing Day a tremendous success. I wish you the very best for a wonderful event.

Watch Mrs. Obama's video online.

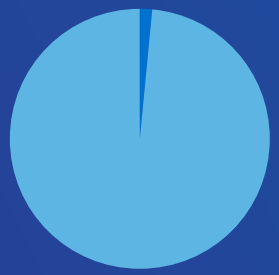
The College Challenge

Education after high school is a critical part of a successful future.

According to the Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce:

MORE THAN 99%

of the jobs created during the most recent economic recovery were filled by workers with some education beyond high school.



65% OF THE JOBS

of the future will require more than a high school diploma.

Yet, too many young people today are not choosing to pursue higher education.

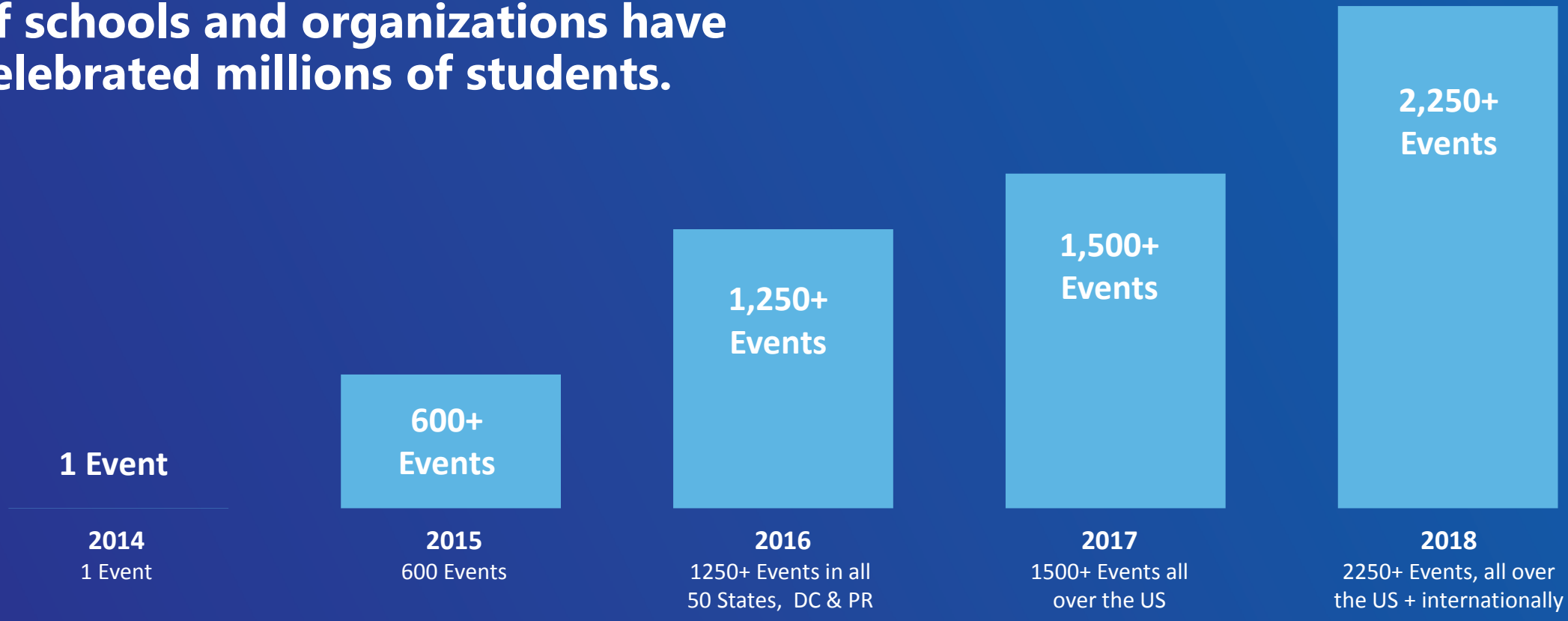
College Signing Day celebrates students.

Whether at a community college, a university, a certification program, the military, or any other education past high school, College Signing Day shows support for this future.

College Signing Day is recognized every year on May 1st , but can be celebrated by schools, organizations, and communities, any day that works best for your students.

Signing Day Success

Over the last six years, thousands of schools and organizations have celebrated millions of students.



Ready to get involved?

This toolkit will help you do just that!

Toolkit + Resources

The resources and ideas on BetterMakeRoom.org/collegesigningday will help you plan your College Signing Day event.

- Funding Your Event
- Event Cards
- Professional Hashtag Signs
- In-House Hashtag Signs
- #CollegeSigningDay Gear
- Sponsor Ask Letter
- Elected Official Ask Letter
- Social Media Guide
  - Social Profile Graphics
  - Social Post Graphics

How to Celebrate College Signing Day

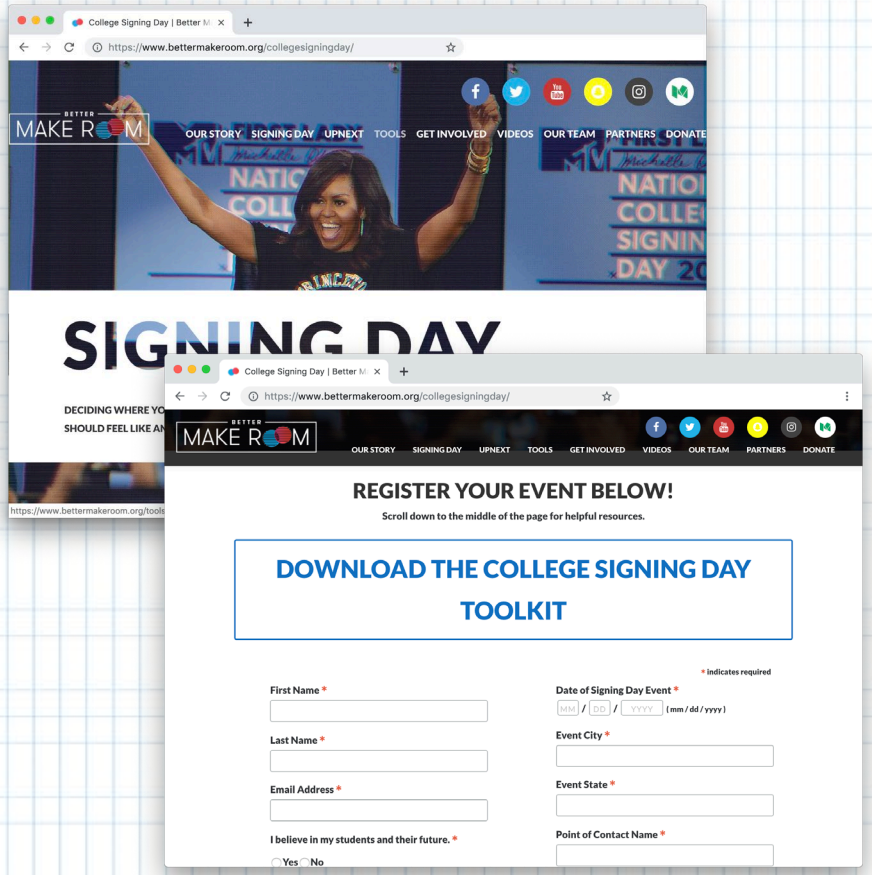
Host a College Signing Day Event.

- **Register your event at bettermakeroom.org/collegesigningday**
  Let us know when and where you're going to celebrate!

- **Download the guides.**
  Use our templates to help you plan the details of your event.

- **Set the date.**
  College Signing Day is May 1st, the deadline when most students must make their college decisions. Be sure to post on social media on May 1st, but you can hold your College Signing Day event anytime in the spring!

- **Celebrate!**
  Share your event on social media with #CollegeSigningDay and #BetterMakeRoom



How to Fund the Event

Hosting an event doesn't have to cost a lot of money.

But, thanks to the College Football Playoff Foundation, we provide school counselors, teachers, and faculty members at public schools the opportunity to apply for a $500 grant toward your College Signing Day event on DonorsChoose.org! The money can be used to buy supplies from a list of over 20 approved vendors on DonorsChoose.org.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF
FOUNDATION

DonorsChoose.org

How to Apply for Funds

To apply for funding, follow these steps in order:

1. Register your event on https://www.bettermakeroom.org/collegesigningday/

2. Go to www.donorschoose.org/teachers and create a school counselor or teacher account. Account holders must be current educators at a public elementary, middle, or high school.

3. Create a project for the materials you need to host your College Signing Day. DonorsChoose.org has a list of approved vendors that you can visit to purchase materials for your College Signing Day event.

4. **Once your project is screened by DonorsChoose.org, you will be notified with next steps by the DonorsChoose.org team. Be sure to look for this notification from DonorsChoose.org.**

5. Once DonorsChoose.org approves your project, email info@reachhigher.org with the link to your project.

How to Raise Funds

In addition to the $500 grant, you may want additional sponsorships from community partners.

- Community partners can provide donations of funds, materials or services. Find a sponsorship outreach letter template on BetterMakeRoom.org that you can download and customize to ask local businesses to sponsor your College Signing Day.
- Also find a link to our Better Make Room Zazzle store where you can purchase official College Signing Day swag like t-shirts, buttons, and stickers for students and guests!

How to Pick the Venue

You don’t need a big stadium to make the day unforgettable.

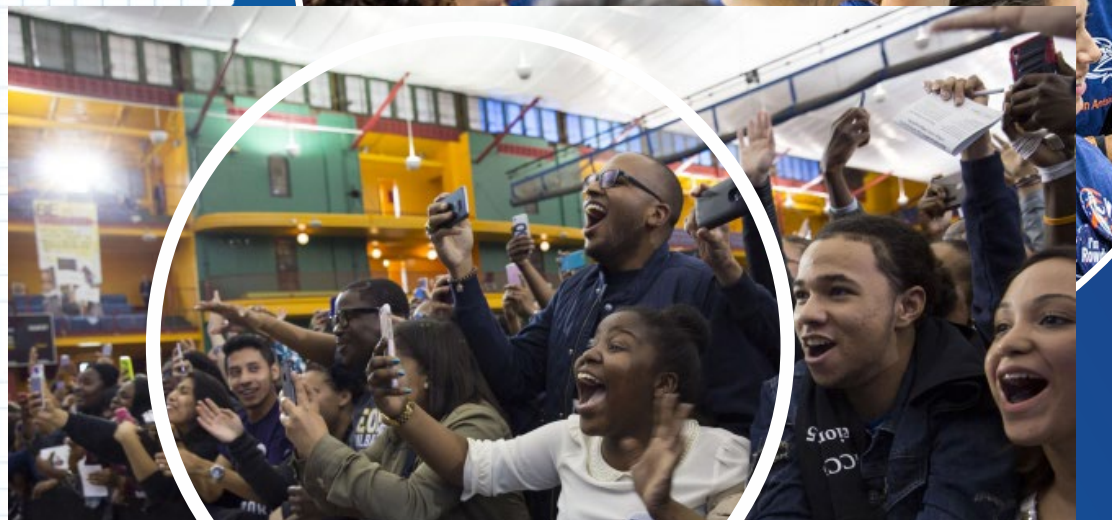
Host your event at your school gym or athletic field, a cafeteria, or a community center. We’ve seen photos of celebrations in classrooms, courtyards, and shopping malls. Get creative!

How to Invite Guests

There are plenty of supporters who will want to celebrate!

- Parents, teachers, counselors, administrators
- Local government officials
- Local celebrities or people of influence

Download a sample invitation on BetterMakeRoom.org!



How to Celebrate Students

It's time to have a party and to get everyone excited!

Ask the students to wear a t-shirt from their college of choice to show off their decision. Ask your guests and colleagues to do the same (whether it's the college they attended or just their favorite).

Everyone decked out in their college shirts will make for a great photo opportunity, so have your cameras ready! Ask your school art department to make a backdrop or props for fun photos. We provide signs at BetterMakeRoom.org that you can download, print, and decorate.

Get your juniors involved too! Ask them to create a Common Application account, and start researching colleges and get ready to complete college applications.

How to Celebrate on Social Media

Using social media is a fun way to highlight your students and their accomplishments.

Share photos of your students wearing college gear and holding signs to celebrate the day. Post them on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat with the hashtags **#CollegeSigningDay** and **#BetterMakeRoom**. Tag us in your posts so that everyone can follow along with your celebration!

Twitter: @ReachHigher @BetterMakeRoom

Instagram: @ReachHigher2020 @BetterMakeRoom

Facebook: ReachHigher BetterMakeRoom

How to Host a Digital College Signing Day

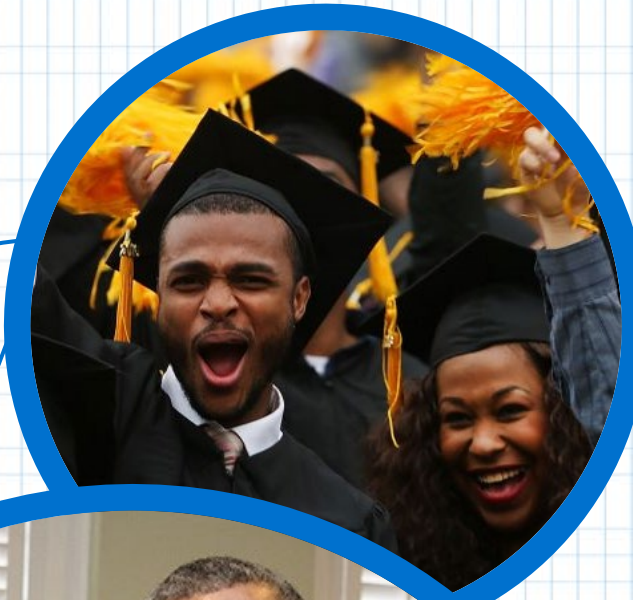
Colleges, universities, businesses, and non-profits can also celebrate College Signing Day.

Post photos on social media of alums in college gear or throwback photos from their days on campus. Describe your fondest college memories in social media posts, showing school spirit, and reminding new students that making the commitment to higher education is worth it. Officially congratulate and welcome all the students committing to attend by reposting their photos, too.

Twitter: @ReachHigher @BetterMakeRoom

Instagram: @ReachHigher2020 @BetterMakeRoom

Facebook: ReachHigher BetterMakeRoom



How to Celebrate in Elementary and Middle Schools

This is a great opportunity to promote college exploration!

- Design a Commitment to My Future pledge for students to take action to keep on the path to college.
- Coordinate a college field trip for students and families.
- Host a family college night with information about early ways to prepare for college.
- Take photos of students in a cap and gown with signs depicting what they want to be when they grow up.
- Dedicate time for a college exploration class showing students how to research colleges.
- Organize a college fair during lunch or after school
- Invite alumni who are in college to speak at an assembly about their experiences
- Design a bulletin board with school staff photos and a map of where they attended college
- Teach students college chants and perform them together at an assembly
- Host a step show featuring local college students who can later interact with students and answer questions

What's Next?

In short, here's what you need to do:

1. Plan your College Signing Day event.
2. Register your event at BetterMakeRoom.org.
3. Involve your students in the planning.
4. Email us if you have questions at info@reachhigher.org.
5. Share photos from your celebration on Twitter and Instagram, and tag Reach Higher and Better Make Room, and use #CollegeSigningDay!

For Updates and More Information

BetterMakeRoom.org | ReachHigher.org

@ReachHigher @BetterMakeRoom

@ReachHigher2020 @BetterMakeRoom

ReachHigher BetterMakeRoom

Email: info@reachhigher.org

#BetterMakeRoom | #ReachHigher | #CollegeSigningDay

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