



# REACH HIGHER

*Complete your education. Own your future.*

## COLLEGE SIGNING DAY KIT

# COLLEGE SIGNING DAY

Deciding where you're going to college is exciting. It's a major step toward a person's future, and it should feel like an epic occasion.

## **Enter: College Signing Day.**

Hosted by schools, organizations, community leaders, and influencers, College Signing Day is a chance to rally around local students, show them your support, and celebrate their choice in making a commitment to higher education. As part of Mrs. Obama's Reach Higher initiative, this movement is a way for educators, counselors, and parents to encourage those heading to college, but as part of Better Make Room it's also a way for students to inspire and encourage others, too.

**We will be celebrating College Signing Day on May 5, and encourage you to celebrate the week of May 1st.**

## **WHAT'S INSIDE:**

- A Message from Mrs. Obama
- The College Challenge
- Reach Higher + Better Make Room
- How to Get Involved
- How to Celebrate in Elementary and Middle Schools

# A MESSAGE FROM MRS. OBAMA

"I am thrilled to know you are developing a 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.

One of my greatest joys is learning of the remarkable students across our country who are taking charge of their future and committing to higher education. That is why we launched the Reach Higher initiative to help achieve the President's "North Star" goal—that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

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

[Watch the video online.](#)



*Michelle  
Obama*

# THE COLLEGE CHALLENGE

Education after high school is a critical part of a successful future. College graduates have more opportunities than those who choose not to pursue their education past high school. In fact, according to Georgetown's Center on Education and Workforce, college graduates are set to make 84% more over their lifetimes than high school graduates.

That said, an education is worth way more than just a higher paycheck—it's the most valuable asset a person can ever have. It is something they will have their entire life, helping them understand the world around them and giving them the tools they need to adapt to challenges and changes they encounter. Yet, many young people today aren't choosing to pursue higher education.

**America once led the world in college graduates and we can do so again by getting two things right:**

1. Supporting and encouraging young people to reach higher
2. Creating a framework for young people commit to higher education, share their stories and inspire others to reach higher

# REACH HIGHER + BETTER MAKE ROOM

**Reach Higher**, an initiative from Mrs. Michelle Obama, 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 4-year college, a 2-year community college or through an industry-recognized training program. Reach Higher focuses on four components: college affordability, exposing students to college, academic and summer planning, and supporting school counselors.

**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 college students to the level of celebrities 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 everyone a way to participate that resonates with them.



# SIGNING DAY SUCCESS



In 2016, in conjunction with Mrs. Obama's College Signing Day event in Harlem, there were high schools participating in EVERY state.





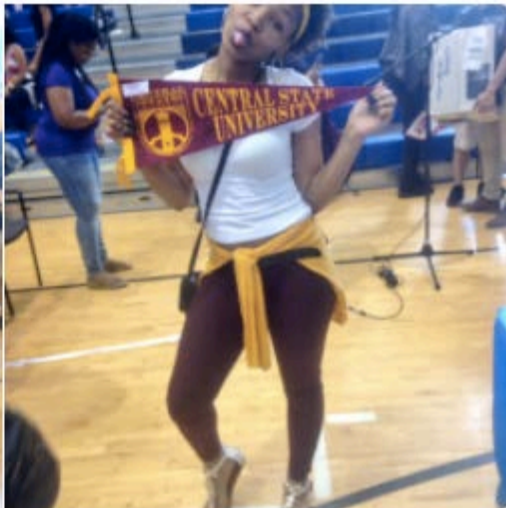
**Mastery Charter** @MasteryCharter · 7 Jun 2016

"When people ask me what Mastery is all about-this is what it is all about." -  
@MasteryCEO #CollegeSigningDay #phled



**Harl8y Q** @TeddyPender\_ · 3 Jun 2016

#collegesigningday #csu20 #centralstate20 #maroonandgold #collegebound #



Don Yu liked



**Ms. Spears** @CAC\_IHSAdviser · 18 May 2016

@IrvingHigh Great pep rally! Great work tigers! #irvingproudcollegebound  
#ReachHigher #BetterMakeRoom #SigningSelfie



@CamdenSchools · 3 Jun 2016

scholars celebrating their higher ed plans @BrimmMAHS  
ay! #CollegeBoundCamden



**Steph** @Goldenxsinner\_ · 3 Jun 2016

University of Illinois on a full ride. ♦



That's 50 states with over 1,200 events! In 2017, we want to reach  
and celebrate more students, and we need your help.



# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

The answer is simple: host a College Signing Day event.

Our team has put together this toolkit to help you do that. Keep an eye on [BetterMakeRoom.org](http://BetterMakeRoom.org) as we start to post more resources to make your job even easier.



**Tyee College Career** @TyeeCampus · 8 Jun 2016

ACE Seniors at **#CollegeSigningDay**. Thanks to the college reps who came and @PowertoDefine for your inspiring words!



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# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Now that you've decided you're on board, how do you get started?

Download the guide on [BetterMakeRoom.org](https://BetterMakeRoom.org) we've created for you to get the basic details in place: things like date, location, time, invitation list, etc.

**Who should be involved in planning our event?** Obviously, make sure to include teachers, counselors and other passionate faculty in the planning, but get students involved in the planning process too! They know how to best inspire and engage their peers, so here's an opportunity to create a student planning committee.

**When should we host our event?** The deadline for students to make decisions on their college of choice is Monday, May 1. We will be celebrating that week. You are invited to celebrate at a time that is best for your schedules. That could be anywhere from between mid-April to early June.

# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

## How do we fund our event?

The first way is on [DonorsChoose.org](https://DonorsChoose.org). Thanks to [DonorsChoose.org](https://DonorsChoose.org) and College Football Playoffs Foundation we have the ability to give 200 lucky event hosts a \$500 grant towards your College Signing Day event! The money can be used to buy supplies from a list of over 20 vendors.

To be in the running to receive the money, please follow these steps:

1. Register your event on [bettermakerroom.org](https://bettermakerroom.org).
2. Go to [www.donorschoose.org/teachers](https://www.donorschoose.org/teachers) and create a school counselor or teacher account.
3. Create a project for the materials you need for College Signing Day.
4. Once your project has been screened by the DonorsChoose.org team, you will be notified. The College Football Playoffs Foundation and Reach Higher will provide 200 lucky winners a \$500 donation to support College Signing Day projects that have been created on DonorsChoose.org.



# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

## How do we fund our event? cont...

In addition to the \$500 from [DonorsChoose.org](https://DonorsChoose.org), you may want additional sponsorships from the community. Community partners can provide monetary donations, material or services. In that case, we will be adding a sponsorship outreach letter to [BetterMakeRoom.org](https://BetterMakeRoom.org) that you can download and customize to ask local businesses and corporations to sponsor your College Signing Day.

At [BetterMakeRoom.org](https://BetterMakeRoom.org), we'll be adding a link to our Zazzle store, where you can use sponsorship money to order College Signing Day swag like t-shirts, buttons and stickers for the students!

**Where should we host our event?** You don't have to have a fancy auditorium or local sports team's field to make this happen—stick to your school gym, school district's football field, or a local community center.

# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

**Who should we invite to our event?** Whether you're a school, local education nonprofit, or school district, you know you'll be inviting your students. But there are plenty of other people that will want to celebrate your students!

- Parents, teachers, counselors, administrators
- Local elected officials like your Mayor, City Councilmen and Councilwomen, local State Representatives
- Local celebrities or people of influence
- Local media, specifically broadcast or a reporter from your major newspaper

We'll be providing a template invitation on [BetterMakeRoom.org](https://BetterMakeRoom.org), but feel free to create your own!

# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

**What should we do at our event?**

CELEBRATE! Get those students excited.  
Treat the event like a pep rally all for them.

Ask the students to **wear a t-shirt from their school of choice** and ask all invitees from the community to do the same (whether it's the college they went to or the one they've chosen to love anyway). Everyone decked out in their college shirts will make for a great photo opportunity!





# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

Speaking of photos, find out if there's a local company that provides **photo booths** or set one up of your own to create a fun place for your students to gather. You can involve your school art department to make a backdrop or props.

At [BetterMakeRoom.org](https://BetterMakeRoom.org) we'll be providing College Signing Day signs you can download and print for students to hold in photos and during the event.



# HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

In short, here's what needs to happen next.

1. Plan your College Signing Day event.
2. Take the College Signing Day pledge and complete the information and speaker request forms at [BetterMakeRoom.org](https://BetterMakeRoom.org).
3. Reach out if you have questions to [reachhigher@civcnation.org](mailto:reachhigher@civcnation.org).

# HOW TO CELEBRATE IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

This is a great opportunity to promote college exploration!

1. Design a "Commitment to My Future" pledge for students to include actions that will keep them on the path to college
2. Coordinate a college field trip for students and families
3. Host a family college night with information about early ways to prepare for college
4. Take photos of students in a cap and gown with signs of what they want to be when they grow up
5. Teach a college exploration classroom including students researching colleges they are interested in attending (middle school)



# HOW TO CELEBRATE IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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6. Organize a student-led college fair
7. Host a college student to speak about their path to college during an assembly
8. Design a bulletin board with school staff photos and a map of where they attended college
9. Read students "Mahalia Mouse Goes to College" by John Lithgow (elementary)
10. Host a door decorating contest for classrooms to sign college themes on their classroom doors
11. Teach students college chants and perform them together at an assembly

# FOR UPDATES AND MORE INFORMATION

[BetterMakeRoom.org](http://BetterMakeRoom.org)

Twitter: @BetterMakeRoom

Instagram: @BetterMakeRoom

Email: [reachhigher@civicnation.org](mailto:reachhigher@civicnation.org)

#BetterMakeRoom

#ReachHigher

#CollegeSigningDay

