



 REACH HIGHER

BETTER
MAKE ROOM 

common
app 

#COLLEGE #SIGNINGDAY

2021 toolkit



Former First Lady Michelle Obama launched the Reach Higher initiative to inspire students – particularly first-generation college students and students from low-income families – to continue their education past high school. Whether that means joining the military, a four-year college, a community college, or an industry-recognized certification program, we want to help students find their path.

Better Make Room is the student-facing campaign supporting Reach Higher that speaks to students directly. Better Make Room aims to elevate college students and says to the world, “These young people are about to do something great, so we Better Make Room.”

Reach Higher and Better Make Room are now part of Common App, a non-profit membership organization dedicated to access, equity, and integrity in the college admission process.

A message from Michelle Obama

I was so thrilled that you'll be celebrating College Signing Day this year! These occasions are such a wonderful opportunity to recognize the hard work of graduating students and inspire even more young people to take the first steps on their journey to higher education.

Back in 2014, we launched Reach Higher at a College Signing Day because we wanted to provide support to students and celebrate their academic accomplishments. I've always loved learning the stories of young people all across the country, especially those who are taking charge of their future and committing to higher education despite whatever challenges they may face.

I was a first-generation college student myself, so I know firsthand the highs and lows that come with following through with this commitment. But never once did I think that attending college wasn't worth it. Especially now, as we work to recover from this pandemic, it's still the best thing students can do for themselves and their future. That is why I am so thankful for educators and supporters like you who are igniting students' passion to continue learning and growing. In case you don't hear it enough: Thank you.

[Watch my College Signing Day video.](#)

Michelle Obama

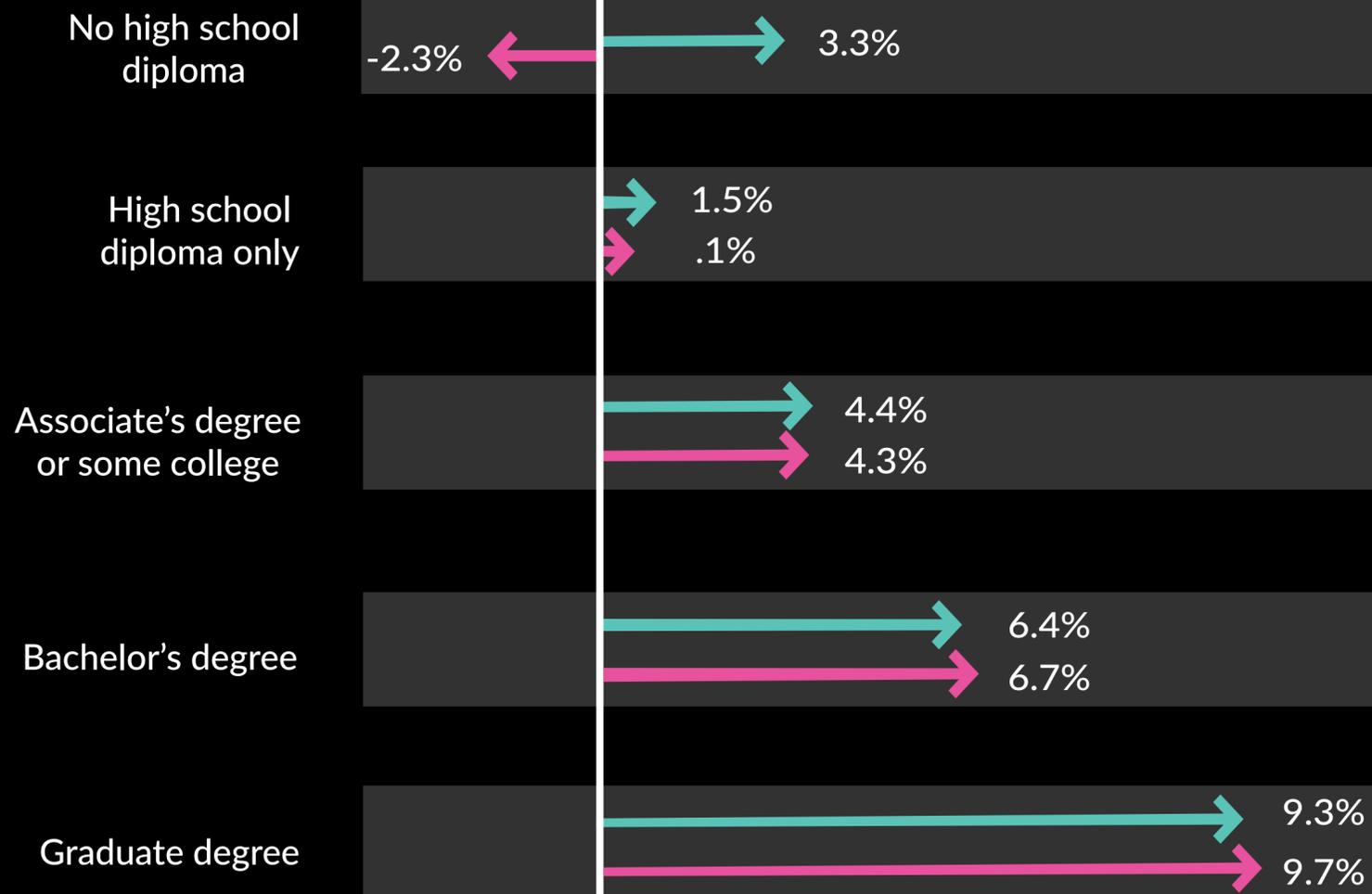


The College Challenge

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, job opportunities across the next decade will be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic*:

Job growth by education level

pre-pandemic projection → post-pandemic projection →

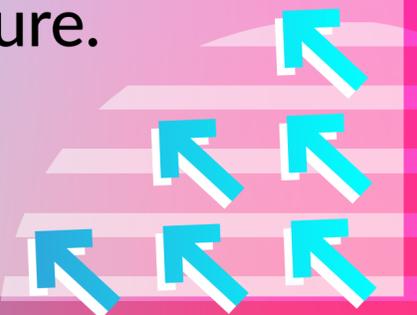


*The New York Times, published 02/21

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

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

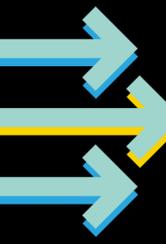
College Signing Day celebrates all students committed to pursuing an education past high school. Whether they plan to attend a community college, a 4-year university, a certification program, the military, or any other education past high school, College Signing Day shows full support of students making decisions for their future.



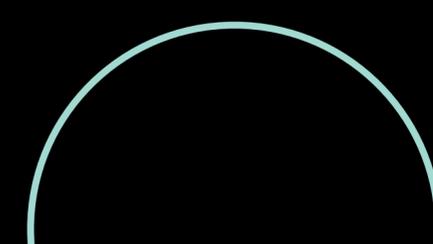
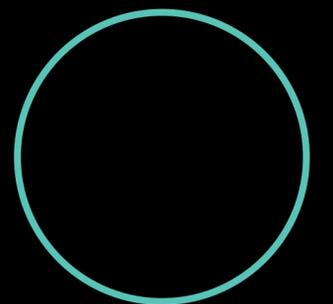
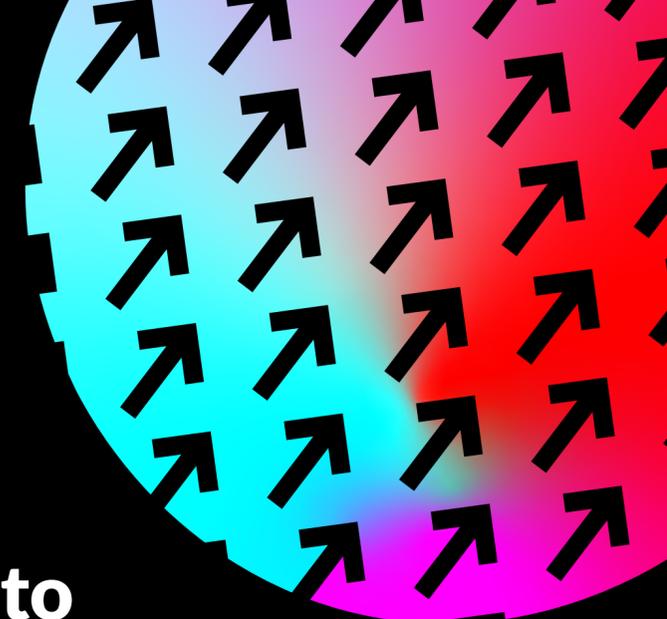
What is College Signing Day?



College Signing Day is an opportunity to celebrate students committing to pursue their education past high school. Whether a student wants to earn a two-year degree, a four-year degree, a certificate or industry-recognized credential, or enlist in the military, we want to celebrate them! Traditionally, we celebrate on May 1, but you should celebrate on a date that works best for your community and your students.

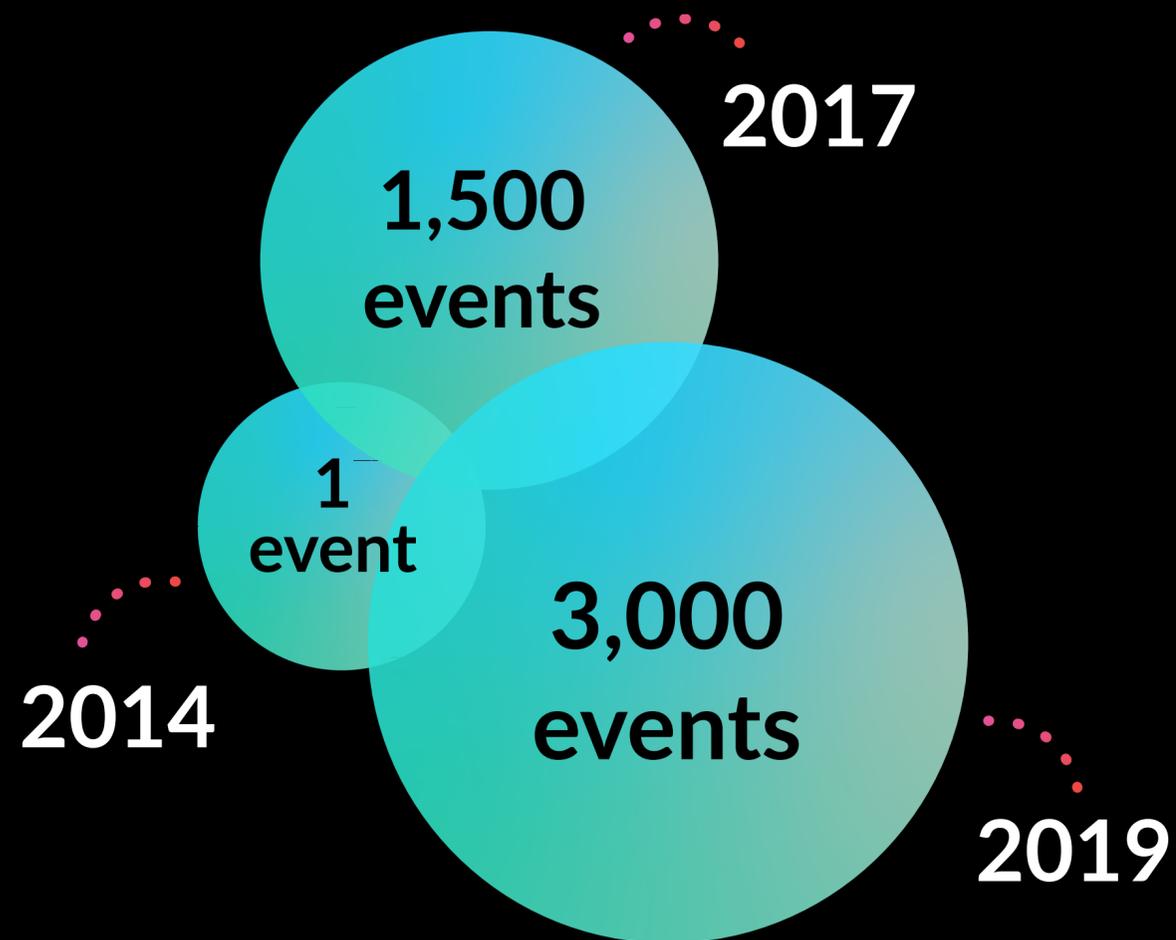


Reach Higher was launched at a College Signing Day event in San Antonio, Texas, in 2014. The community there celebrated all of their students' goals for higher education, and Mrs. Obama joined in the celebrations. This set the standard to continue the celebration in schools and districts all across the country for years to come!

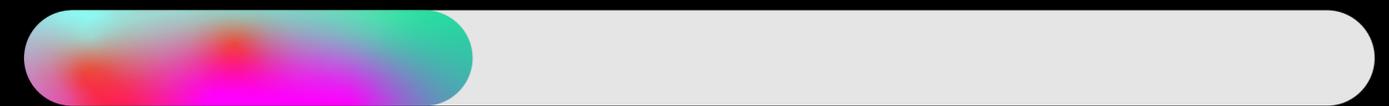


Signing Day Success

Over the last 7 years, thousands of schools and organizations have celebrated millions of students.



And we didn't let 2020 stop us:



4.4 million social media impressions



18.1 million views on TikTok of student-led celebrations

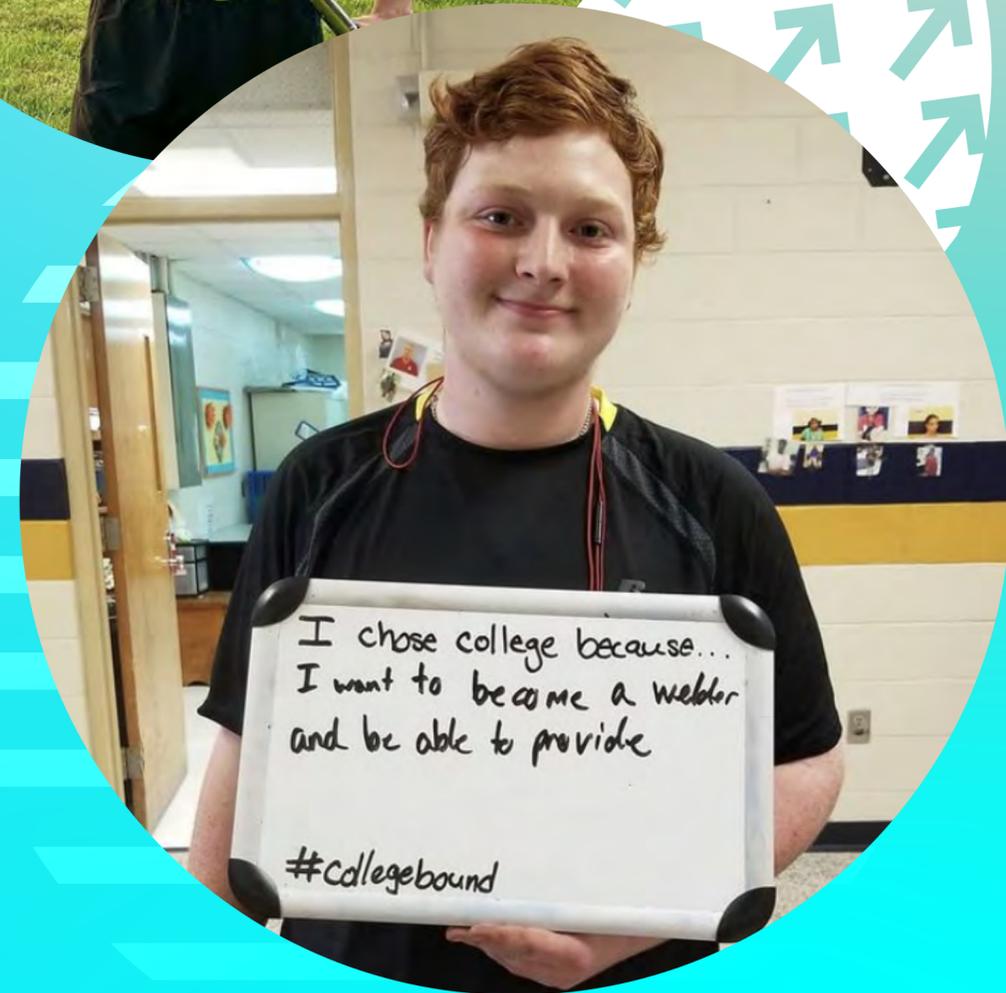


924 million social media accounts reached

Recognizing all Post-Secondary Plans

At Better Make Room and Reach Higher, we know there's nothing more important than getting an education past high school, whether at a professional training program, a community college, a four-year college or university, or in the military. That's why we celebrate College Signing Day each year!

However, we recognize that some of your students may not feel like they can participate in College Signing Day if they aren't choosing a "traditional" college education. Their choice to attend a technical college, earn a certificate, or enlist in the military is just as impactful as attending a two- or four-year institution. Let's celebrate all students together!



How to Celebrate College Signing Day

Host a College Signing Day Celebration!

1. Register at BetterMakeRoom.org/CollegeSigningDay

Let us know that you're going to celebrate virtually or safely in-person!

2. Set the date

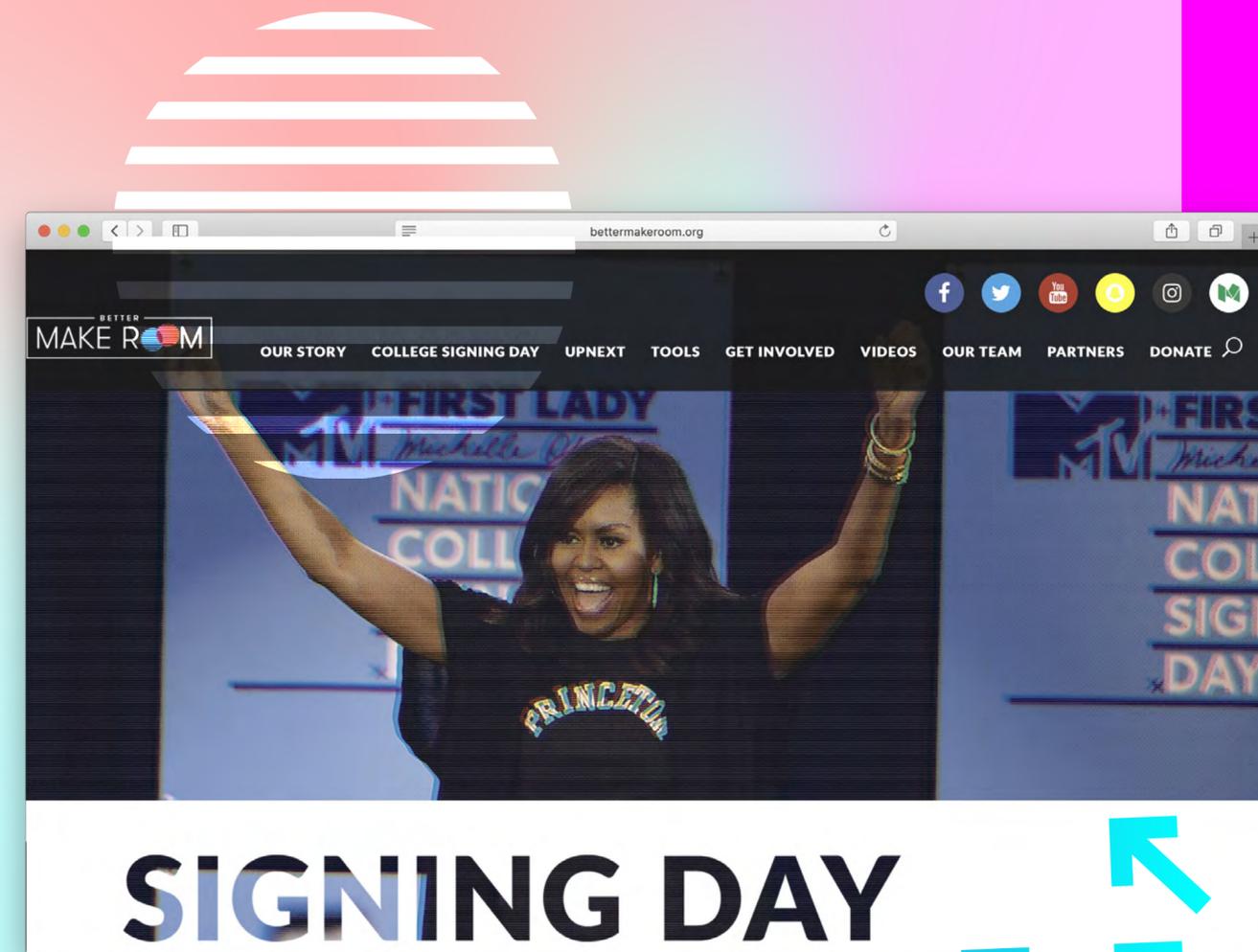
You can celebrate your College Signing Day event any day that works for your students. Be sure to post on social media on May 1 and throughout the month as students make their commitments.

3. Download the guides

Use our templates to help you plan the details, especially our social media guide.

4. Celebrate!

Share your excitement on social media with [#CollegeSigningDay](#) and [#BetterMakeRoom!](#)



How to Host a Digital College Signing Day

Here's how you can host College Signing Day virtually.

Host a virtual event with a keynote speaker, college representatives, current college students, or college graduates. Ask each student to record a video announcing where they are going and share it online! Get your juniors involved, too! Ask them to create a Common App account and add at least 5 colleges to their list to start researching schools. This will help them get ready to complete college applications in the future.

Last year, we celebrated College Signing Day virtually and thousands of people celebrated their graduating seniors online as well. Search #CollegeSigningDay on social media to see best practices from school counselors, educators, and students for how you can celebrate your community in a digital way.



How to Celebrate on Social Media

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

Encourage students to share photos of themselves wearing college gear and holding signs to celebrate the day. Post them on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok with the hashtags [#CollegeSigningDay](#) and [#BetterMakeRoom](#). Tag [@BetterMakeRoom](#) or [@ReachHigher](#) in your posts so that we can follow along with your celebrations!

Instagram: [@BetterMakeRoom](#) | [@ReachHigher](#)

Twitter: [@BetterMakeRoom](#) | [@ReachHigher](#)

Facebook: [Better Make Room](#) | [Reach Higher](#)

TikTok: [@BetterMakeRoom](#)



How to Celebrate In-Person

If your school is operating in-person, celebrate College Signing Day safely!

Please make sure to follow your local COVID-19 guidelines to keep your staff and students safe.

You can host an afterschool drive-by celebration at your school, and invite students to wear their masks and rep their college! Create a College Signing Day ceremony where students can sign their offer letters in front of their peers. Invite a current college student or college alum to speak to your graduating class.



Resources

Register your College Signing Day at BetterMakeRoom.org/CollegeSigningDay, where we will be uploading social media guides, social media graphics, in-person accessories, and more!

Our CSD newsletter will send College Signing Day updates and behind-the-scenes look from now until May 1! Sign up to receive our CSD newsletters and be the first to know when we release new resources: bit.ly/CSD21Newsletter.



How to Celebrate with Elementary and Middle School Students

This is a great opportunity for college exploration!

- Design a Commitment to My Future pledge for students to take action to keep on the path to college.
- Share photos or drawings of students in a cap and gown with signs depicting what they want to be when they grow up.
- Share information with families about exploring colleges online while at home.

- Organize a college fair during virtual lunch or after school, if in-person.
- Invite alumni who are in college to speak to students about their experiences.
- Design a virtual bulletin board with school staff photos and a map of where they attended college.



Need More Inspiration?

Celebrating College Signing Day is all about what works best for you and your community! There are so many ways to celebrate at little to no cost to you or your students. You can host a safe in-person or virtual DIY event where students can make their own college signs and pennants.

Give your students time in class to create a mood board about what they envision their first year after graduating high school might look like. You can also host a “Letter to Your Future Self” session where students can write a handwritten letter or schedule an email to be sent to themselves a year from your CSD event!



What's Next?



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

1. Register your College Signing Day event at BetterMakeRoom.org/CollegeSigningDay.
2. Celebrate with your community on a day that works for you.
3. Share photos from your celebrations on social media throughout the month, but especially on May 1. Tag @BetterMakeRoom or @ReachHigher, and use [#CollegeSigningDay](https://twitter.com/CollegeSigningDay).
4. Email us if you have questions at info@BetterMakeRoom.org.



For Updates and More Information

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