WHAT IS OREGON DECISION DAY?

Oregon Decision Day (DD) is a celebration of students’ plans for continuing their education or training after high school. This handbook contains suggestions for possible programming. You do not need to do everything you see here! Feel free to add your own ideas. **Successful activities focus on celebrating 12th graders’ decisions with opportunities for including families and younger students in honoring the graduates.**

Research tells us that celebrating education milestones is critical for students, families, and educators. Marking occasions matters to students being recognized, and witnessing the celebrations has a positive impact on younger students who may look forward to receiving future accolades. Plan your DD activities or events with these goals in mind to increase their effectiveness. Most schools will host events so they coincide with the National Candidates’ Reply Date of May 1st, This is the date that most 4-year colleges and universities in the United States have agreed on as the deadline for students’ selecting a college and paying their deposit. You may decide to host your DD celebrations any time between mid-April and early June.

Additional planning resources can be found at [oregongoestocollege.org/dd](http://oregongoestocollege.org/dd).

*Decision Day supports the national College Signing Day initiative sponsored by Better Make Room.*
Everyone! All of our senior year events are designed to be inclusive, not exclusive. The goal of DD is to celebrate students’ decisions to plan for life after high school. Hosting events and activities for both students and families will increase your success.

Decision Day activities can be as big or small, splashy or subtle as you like. Choose options that make sense for your school community. Oregon schools have had success with

1. Posting graduates’ photos in a prominent place, with information about their future plans;
2. Recognizing students on social media;
3. Hosting a signing day;
4. Sending seniors to the elementary school for a grad walk;
5. Sponsoring college cohort dinners;
6. And much more!
# DECISION DAY COORDINATOR CHECKLIST

## BEFORE APRIL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>☑️ Register.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| □ **Sign up** to be an official DD site.  
  • While you’re at it, consider registering to host all three 12th grade events: College Application Week, College Cash Campaign, and Decision Day. |
| □ Review the Coordinator Handbook and materials. Contact Oregon GEAR UP with any questions. **E-mail** or use the "Contact Us" form on our website. |
| □ Follow us on social media so you can keep up to date and share useful posts with students. We're on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#). |
| □ **Sign up for** [Better Make Room’s College Signing Day](#) to join the national movement. |

## Think ahead.

| □ Recruit your DD team. Include a variety of people who will help plan and host your activities - administrators, teachers, parents, and students are all good choices! |
| □ Meet with them to choose what types of events or activities you’ll host to celebrate your seniors’ choices and inspire younger students to make a plan for their own futures.  
  • Consider including at least one event (e.g. a signing day or grad walk) and one highly visible display in your hallways.  
  • Set your objectives and goals for each event. What do you want participants to learn or do? How many people do you hope will participate? Will you include elements that help students with the transition to college? |
| □ Decide when you will hold your events or activities.  
  • May 1st is the National Candidates Reply Date for most 4-year colleges in the country. Hosting your events around this time can help students stay on track with college deadlines. |
| □ Watch the mail for your supply of DD posters and certificates. Make a plan for how you’ll use them. |

## Prepare students.

| □ Provide tools to help students and their families finalize their post-high school plans.  
  • Explore the importance of finding a good fit college, including academic, social, and financial factors.  
  • Help students and families understand all college costs and compare financial aid awards, using [resources for College Cash Campaign coordinators](#). |
| □ Complete a list of students’ plans. You can use this list to prepare for your event. Bonus! The list will be helpful when you [update (or create) next year’s school profile](#). |
DECISION DAY COORDINATOR CHECKLIST

BEFORE EACH ACTIVITY/EVENT

☑️ Get ready.

☐ Add the event to your school/organization calendar.

☐ Reserve space. Do you need an auditorium, gym or classroom? Do you need a clear bulletin board or other prominent space in the hallway?
  • Follow your school’s process for scheduling if the room needs to be set up in a special configuration.

☐ Review your event objectives. How will you meet them?

☐ Plan for additional needs for after-hours or family events.
  • Will offering food or childcare increase the number of families who can participate? Can these services be donated? Make appropriate arrangements for your community’s needs.

☐ Use your list of students’ colleges to update maps & displays and to print certificates or pennants.

☑️ Get help.

☐ Use guest speakers, especially for topics you are less comfortable leading.

☐ Recruit volunteers. They can help welcome students & families to an event, answer questions, set up/clean up, and a whole lot more.
  • Consider using younger students as volunteers when appropriate. This can offer extra inspiration for them to make their own future plans!

☐ Ask faculty and staff how they would like to get involved.

☑️ Spread the word.

☐ Remind students and families about your event. Use your school’s most effective means of communicating important information. Include suggestions of ways parents/guardians can help their senior prepare for the event.
  • Send special invitations to parents/guardians if they are welcome to attend. Consider honoring the role they’ve played in helping students achieve their goals.

☐ Remind teachers and staff about your event. Encourage them to participate and to reinforce the importance of participating with their 12th grade students.

☐ Hang posters and other signs around your building to advertise the event. Color posters came with your DD mailing.

☐ Send a press release to your local media if your event is open to the public or will include participation of the majority of your 12th graders. Consider inviting them to send a reporter to cover the event.
DECISION DAY COORDINATOR CHECKLIST

DURING YOUR EVENT/ACTIVITY

- Prepare your space.
- Decorate for your event or activity. Remember the theme is one of celebration!
- Set up the room. Include a designated space for students and families to sign in so you know who is participating.
  - Make it easier: print a complete list of your senior class to use as a sign-in sheet during your event. Include space to ask if they have met the objective.
- Greet volunteers, give them a nametag, and assign them a job to do.

- Do it!
- Celebrate students.
- Post photos to social media and tag Oregon Goes To College.

AFTER YOUR EVENT/ACTIVITY

- Evaluate.
- Debrief with your planning team and volunteers. What went well? What will you change for next time?
- Complete the DD Coordinator’s Survey.

- Follow up.

- Help students prepare for the transition to college.
  - Use CCC Coordinator resources to teach students about budgeting and financial literacy.
  - Remind students and families about the importance of keeping up to date with colleges’ summer deadlines and fall enrollment dates.
Your DD activities may range from a hallway display showing students’ post-high school plans to a full-school college signing day extravaganza, or from a scholarship awards night for families to a grad walk at the local elementary school. As long as you keep the goals of celebrating students’ decisions and inspiring younger students to follow in their footsteps, your efforts will make a difference. Regardless of how you choose to honor your students, the following key questions will help you plan:

**For displays:**

- **What prominent place in your school will host the display?**
- **Which students do you want to honor and what will you display?**
  - Will you display plans for all students who have them (e.g. college or university, apprenticeship, military, or verified employment)?
  - How will you collect the information and any necessary items (e.g. college admissions letters, student photos)?
- **Who is responsible for putting up and taking down the display?**

**For events:**

- **How many students/families do you want to participate?**
  - How will you encourage participation? *(Remember that you have a supply of DD posters that you can use to advertise your activities.)*
  - Do you need to offer any special accommodations like childcare or food to increase family engagement?
- **Where will you host your event?**
  - What kind of space do you need?
- **Will you need volunteers?**
  - How will you recruit them? Do you need students, families, teachers/school staff, or community members?
  - What kind of training will they need?
What students, staff, and visitors see when they walk through your hallways has an impact on your efforts to build a college-going culture. Public displays celebrating students’ efforts and accomplishments serve to recognize students while inspiring others to strive for the same. April through June is the perfect time to display students’ postsecondary plans with as much pride and public awareness as your school’s athletic trophy case.

Find a prominent bulletin board, wall, or other space to use as a public display of your students’ successes:

- Hang maps of the US and/or Oregon, and encourage students to place a tack showing where they’re headed next fall.
- Post students’ photos with the name of their college or university. Consider adding their intended major or career plan.
- Hang pennants from each college your alumni attend. Post students’ names under each pennant. Add to the list each year, so younger students can see they won’t be alone if they choose to go there, too.  
  
  👇 DIY Pennant  

- Create a space for students to sign their name by the name of their chosen college.
- Ask students to provide copies of their acceptance letters to post.
Nationally, College Signing Days have become increasingly popular, especially with support from Michelle Obama’s Better Make Room initiative. Signing day celebrations can be big and splashy or small and subdued, depending on the needs of your community. Regardless of what you choose, you’ll definitely want to include:

- **Opportunities for all students to declare their intentions for next fall.** They can sign a certificate you create, announce their college of choice from the stage, or complete their actual deposit paperwork.
- **Congratulations messages** from influential people in the students’ lives—school staff, family members, mentors, alumni, etc.
- **A celebratory atmosphere.** Consider what that means for your school. It could be balloons, hand drawn signs, cake & punch, prizes, or something else unique to your students and community.

Discover more information and ideas about the national effort:

✉️ Better Make Room’s Signing Day Toolkit
GRAD WALKS

It’s not a secret that elementary school students think teenagers are cool. And it’s not a secret that teens like to be cool. Capitalize on both of these with a Grad or Senior Walk. These special events serve a dual purpose: remind graduates how far they’ve come and offer inspiration to younger students to set their own goals to graduate. During these special events, graduates

- **Return to their elementary schools** in their caps and gowns.
- **Walk through the hallways** or in the gym, while younger students cheer them on and receive high-fives or hugs.
- **See their former elementary school teachers.** Bonus: these meetings can be a great opportunity for seniors to thank those who helped them in their early education.

Increase the effectiveness of these events with time for graduates to talk with younger students about continuing their education. Provide opportunities for seniors to share their future plans and for younger students to ask questions about what high school or college is like.