

Iowa College Decision Day

Tips For Building a College-Going Culture

College Decision Day will look different at each high school. It is important you plan an event that fits the needs of your students and community.

During the planning and implementation stages of your College Decision Day event, it is very important to keep your school staff apprised of the event schedule. Work with members of your staff to identify the most effective schedule possible for your specific high school.

Create a “College Wall or Banner.” Seniors write the names of the college where they plan to attend on banners or strips of construction paper to hang in a main hallway. Utilize art teachers (if available) for additional promotional materials to create a “college-going culture” on the walls of your school.

Announcements. Make announcements over the school audio/video system to acknowledge students who decided to enroll and share where they will be going to college.

Assembly. Host an all-school assembly to celebrate the postsecondary accomplishments of each of your seniors and their families. This event assembly could be an add-on to an already established school event or as a stand-alone assembly. Make sure to invite all grade-levels to participate.

- Suggested prizes: Microwave, mini-fridge, tablets, computer, college survival kit, pencils, flags, t-shirt
- Community Picnic or Fair. Host an afterschool community-wide picnic or celebration. This may require a larger budget, but will involve more community members and students of all ages.
- Food: Pizza and BBQ chicken are always a hit.
- Entertainment: Consider a DJ or local band, plan a flash mob, or provide games for all ages.

Guest speakers. Whether you host a school assembly or a community event, invite high school alumni, elected officials, college admissions and financial aid representatives, local business leaders and parents to elaborate from personal experience on the importance of college.

Interviews. Interview seniors about their college plans and send the articles to local newspapers, as public service announcements on local radio, as intercom/homeroom announcements, as ads in the school newspaper; or create a special section in the school newspaper that gives the names of seniors and their selected college.

College gear. Encourage students and school staff to wear college t-shirts on a particular day of the week.



Iowa College Decision Day

Tips For Building a College-Going Culture

Social media. As students bring in evidence of their postsecondary plans in the form of a college acceptance letter, military orders, or a similar offer letter, take pictures of the students with those letters/forms and post it to the school's social media channels using the hashtags #ReachHigher and #IADecisionDay.

Involve teachers and staff. During College Decision Day, ask teachers to share their college experience, wear their alma mater gear and post signs on classroom doors advertising where they went to school. Promote the idea of college.

Provide early awareness of the steps needed to enroll in college for younger students and families.

Workshops. Provide workshops to younger students and their families.

- Possible topics: decision making, learning styles, study habits, the importance of GPA and high school course selection, college test prep, how to get help with grades and test prep, essay writing, applying to college, college admission criteria, Iowa College Student Aid website, paying for college, "I'm admitted – now what?", etc.

College spotlight. In the months or weeks leading up to Decision Day, choose a different college or university to feature in each morning's announcements. Play the school's fight song. Ask trivia questions and award prizes for correct answers.

Adopt-a-College. Each classroom can "adopt" a college to represent for the rest of year. This can be the teacher's alma mater or the class may select a college/university. Students can decorate the classroom door with the college/university colors and logo.

Conduct one-on-one or classroom visits with seniors and ask students if they have:

- Applied to college?
- Been admitted to college?
- Officially notified the college or university that they will enroll?
- Completed the FAFSA?

Gather students' college choices in advance.



Iowa College Decision Day

Activity Suggestions

“Ask Me About It!”

Purpose

- To identify staff members by their institutions of higher education.
- To engage students in dialogue with faculty and staff members regarding college access, college preparation, application, enrollment, etc.

Activities

- Have the entire faculty and staff display an 8 ½" x 11" poster that lists alma maters (colleges and/or universities where they completed degrees).
- Post college signs and display them all year.
- Create a scavenger hunt during a specific time-frame (i.e., during homeroom) and allow students to complete the challenges for as many different schools as they can find, the school farthest away, the school with the most alumni, etc. Award small prizes.
- Explore the KnowHow2Go University virtual tour in the classroom while teachers share their college experience (<http://www.knowhow2go.org/campustour/>).

Preparation

- E-mail a sample sign like the one included in this Handbook to all faculty and staff and designate a posting date.
- Scavenger hunt- provide copies to every home room.
- Bingo- provide copies to every home room.



Iowa College Decision Day

Activity Suggestions

College Alumni Family Night

Purpose

- To familiarize families and students with community and four-year public and private colleges and universities
- To provide networking opportunities

Activities

- Have staff and parents represent the colleges and universities. Ask parents and staff to wear college and university shirts and hats and display flags or other items of interest to represent their institutions of higher education.
- Invite college admission offices to send materials for display or to send admission staff to attend.

Preparation

- Schedule an evening, possibly in conjunction with a PTSA meeting. Reserve a space and make a promotion plan. Ask parents and the PTSA officers to provide refreshments and college paraphernalia door prizes.
- Invite parents and staff to represent colleges and universities for your student body.
- Invite admission counselors from nearby colleges to set-up information tables.
- Create sign-in sheets for each college/university represented to record attendance and collect comments.
- Create a "Good Questions to Ask" sheet for students to use as they visit alumni and collect information on their selected schools of interest.

