

DECISION DAY

MAY 6-10

2024

A TOOLKIT FOR CELEBRATING THE
POST-SECONDARY PLANS OF
MONTANA'S 2024 GRADUATING CLASS



INTRODUCTION

Decision Day is the fourth event in the academic year facilitated by programs within the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education as part of the College Access Arc of Events. These events are designed to help students graduate with tools and skills for success in post-secondary education, career, and life. Collectively, the events are known as *APPLY*, *AID*, and *ACT*.



Decision Day celebrates students' plans for post-secondary education, military service, or career. For the students who have *applied* to college and secured financial *aid*, they still need to *act*. Decision Day recognizes the act of signing college acceptance letters and committing to post-secondary pursuits.

Decision Day is a week in which schools celebrate all students who made it to graduation and are going to college, serving their country, starting a career, or embarking on other adventures.

STATE CONTACT FOR ASSISTANCE

If you are receiving this toolkit, your school is registered to participate in the College Access Arc of Events. We know planning a spring event can be challenging. That is why we set a week aside for Montanans to celebrate our seniors. Pick a single day, or do something every day during the week. Personalize Decision Day to match your needs.

If you need ideas or have questions, help is available through our office.

COLLEGE ACCESS

WORKING TO ENSURE ALL MONTANA STUDENTS HAVE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND AND SUCCEED IN COLLEGE



MONTANA ARC OF EVENTS 2023-2024



**OCT.
2-13**

COLLEGE APPLICATION WEEK(S)
Apply to MT colleges/universities for FREE

**CHECK
WEBSITE
FOR NEW
DATES**

FAFSA COMPLETION MONTH
Complete at FAFSA.GOV for FREE

**APRIL
1-5**

C.A.P. WEEK
Complete the application process

**MAY
6-10**

DECISION DAY
Let's celebrate everyone's post high school plans!

CONTACT:

Dawes Elwood

College Access Manager

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SUGGESTED FLOW OF DECISION DAY EVENTS

The Friday before: Introduce Decision Day, review its purpose (i.e. to celebrate seniors and their plans, including college, career, military service), and invite your community to participate with schools across Montana (and the nation).

Monday: Mayoral Proclamation for the week, raise awareness through social media, begin highlighting seniors.

Tuesday: Continue with events and social media.

Wednesday: Decision Day main event(s).

Thursday: Continue with awareness and social media presence.

Friday: Wrap up the celebration with a school-wide message of congratulations.



EVENT IDEAS

- HOLD AN ASSEMBLY TO FEATURE SENIOR DECISIONS
- HOST A STUDENT PANEL IN CLASSROOMS AT SCHOOLS ACROSS THE DISTRICT
- DECORATE LOCKERS WITH POST-SECONDARY PLANS
- WRITE THANK-YOU LETTERS TO THOSE WHO'VE HELPED ALONG THE WAY
- WEAR/DISPLAY GEAR FROM YOUR ALMA MATER (staff)
- FEATURE STUDENT DECISIONS IN A VIRTUAL TOUR
- PARADE THROUGH YOUNGER SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT IN COLLEGIATE/
PROFESSIONAL GEAR
- COLLABORATE WITH LOCAL NEWS/MEDIA OUTLETS TO INTERVIEW SENIORS AND
RECOGNIZE THEIR DECISIONS
- ASSIGN EXPLORATORY ACTIVITIES AT LOWER GRADE LEVELS
(essay/poster/presentation on future plans)
- UTILIZE STUDENTS IN MEDIA CLASSES TO DOCUMENT SENIOR DECISIONS
(photography/yearbook/journalism)
- REACH OUT TO MONTANA COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES FOR APPAREL TO DISPLAY
- DESIGNATE A PRESS AREA FOR SIGNING AND PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES
- SHARE STORIES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA SAMPLE POSTS

BEFORE DECISION DAY EVENTS

Learn what our seniors are doing after graduation... #MTDecisionDay May 6-10.

You watched them grow; find out where they're going next May 6-10.

#CollegeSigningDay

APPLIED? Accepted. FAFSA? Done. SIGNED YOUR COLLEGE ACCEPTANCE LETTER? ...

#MTDecisionDay

College? Enlistment? Workforce?

Let us know! #iDecidedMT

DURING DECISION DAY EVENTS

Learn what our seniors are doing after graduation... #MTDecisionDay

See what the future holds for this year's graduates. #CollegeSigningDay

[link to video, photo, event date]

These students worked hard to get here. Let's celebrate! #MTDecisionDay

A special shout out to our seniors who are signing their college acceptance letters this week.

#MTDecisionDay

Congratulations to our seniors who will be starting military service. #iDecidedMT

Today we celebrate our graduating class and all the different paths they will take after graduation. #iDecidedMT

AFTER DECISION DAY EVENTS

Thank you to all the students who participated!

#MTDecisionDay

To all the parents, families, loved ones of this year's graduates - thank you for the support!

#iDecidedMT

Thank you to the volunteers who helped make our #DecisionDay a success!

#iDecidedMT
#CollegeSigningDay
#DecisionDay
#MTDecisionDay

TAG MUS...

FB & X: @AccessMUS

IG: @Access_MUS

SAMPLE ANNOUNCEMENTS

SUGGESTED ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE WEEK

Friday before: "Starting next week we will be celebrating our senior class and highlighting their future plans. We are proud of our graduating class."

Monday: "This week, we are celebrating our senior class and what they will be doing after high school. Here are some opportunities you can join in as part of our celebration: [List of activities]"

Tuesday: "As we continue to celebrate our senior class and their post-graduation plans, we would like to mention the following students who are going to college: [Student Name; College Name]"

Wednesday: "This week we are celebrating our senior class and what they will be doing after high school. Today, we recognize those who are going into the military: [Student Name; Military Branch]"

Thursday: "This week, we are celebrating our senior class and what they will be doing after high school. Today, we recognize those who are going to start a career, get on the job training, or pursue other opportunities: [Student Name; Plans]"

Friday: "This week, we were celebrating our senior class and what they will be doing after high school. Today, we would like to encourage all students to begin thinking of your future. If you hope to go to college, please talk with your advisor to make sure you take the right classes and know how to afford it. Congratulations to our senior class!"

ADDITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR EVENTS

"As part of our celebration of our senior class, we would like to ask that tomorrow you wear clothing to represent your future plans. For example, if you are thinking about attending college, wear something that shows the college you want to attend. "

"Our senior class is signing a banner to show their future plans. Seniors, please stop by and add your plans. The banner is located [identify where]. We hope you will take a minute to stop and check out the next step for our seniors. Congratulate them when you see them in the halls."

"Our college-bound seniors studied took time to meet graduation requirements, apply for college, and apply for financial aid, and today they are going to sign their college acceptance letters. Please join us [Location, Time] to watch them take this exciting step."

"As we celebrate our seniors' decisions to go to college, we've asked our teachers to wear clothing that represents their colleges. We encourage you to ask teachers about their college experiences."

"All week we are celebrating our senior class and what they are doing after graduation. If you are unsure of what you want to do, we want to tell you about MCIS. Montana Career Information System is a website you can use to learn about careers. MCIS is an excellent tool to help you identify your strengths, specify your interests, and explore your future..."

SAMPLE LETTER TO DONORS

Asking for Support: You may have local businesses or philanthropists who support higher education. Be specific in your ask. Have a budget of all expenses. You also may reach out to the university or college where your students will be attending and ask for promotional items.

[School Name]

[School Address]

[Date]

Dear [Name of Organization or Individual],

We are pleased to announce our participation in Montana's Decision Day events. The goal of Decision Day is to celebrate all students and their commitment to continue their education beyond high school. Our event is part of a statewide effort organized by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Our Decision Day event will be [insert date] and with your help, students will have the opportunity to proudly represent their postsecondary plans to all students at [name of school]. This event will further promote a college going culture at our school; peers will be able to see high school graduation is not the end, but merely the beginning. We would welcome [insert request of assistance, donations, etc.]. Our students would benefit and appreciate your help and support as they take the next step in their lives; whether that is going to college, enrolling in a technical or certification program, or enlisting in the military.

If you are able to assist us in making our Decision Day event a success, please contact [name, contact info]. Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Thank you,

[Name]

[Title]

SAMPLE LETTER TO FAMILIES

Asking for Support: Parents and caregivers are a great resource for getting the word out about Decision Day. Their promotion via social media and word of mouth can drive the success of your event(s). Adapt the letter below to fit the needs of your event.

[School Name]

[School Address]

[Date]

Dear [Parent or Caregiver],

We are pleased to announce our participation in Montana's Decision Day. The goal of Decision Day is to celebrate graduating seniors and their decision for after graduation. We especially lift up those whose plans include getting more education. Our event will be [date] and is part of a statewide effort organized by the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Decision Day is meant to be inclusive. We will celebrate the post-graduation plans of our [year] graduates, whether they are enrolling in a certificate or technical program, two-year degree, four-year degree, enlisting in the military, or starting a career.

We are encouraging all students to participate in our Decision Day event. We believe you are an integral part of your student's success beyond high school. We are inviting families to participate in [describe event].

If you would like to volunteer for this event, please let me know. Volunteers can greet students, sign up students, or assist in the production of the event. If you are unable to volunteer, you can help celebrate the students by participating via social media, by reposting from our site and by using the hashtag #MTDecisionDay to share your student's plans after graduation.

If you have any questions please call [name, title, phone number]. Thank you for your support of this important initiative to celebrate students' plans for after high school.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title]

SAMPLE LOCAL PRESS RELEASE

[Insert School Logo or Letterhead]

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: [Name of site coordinator]

[Title of site coordinator]

[School name]

[School address]

[Phone number]

[Email of contact person]

[High school website]

Decision Day to be held [date] at [name of school].

[Name of school] will be hosting a Decision Day event on [date] to celebrate the post-secondary plans of our graduates. Decision Day is part of Montana's college access initiative and an extension of College Application Week held in the fall.

The goal of this event is to highlight the students who make plans to continue their education after high school. During this event, students will be recognized for choosing to enroll in community colleges, technical programs, private colleges, public universities, and enlisting in the military. [Could enter an example of a student or list of graduates?]

[Name of site coordinator], Site Coordinator for [name of school], expects more than [number of graduates] graduates to participate with the help of [number of volunteers] volunteers from [insert school staff, administration, college and community resources, and others who are assisting].

SAMPLE MAYORAL PROCLAMATION

Mayoral Proclamation

[Name of City], Montana

WHEREAS the youth of Montana are our strongest asset for the future of Montana, and will become future leaders driving economic growth, innovation, and stability for all Montanans;

WHEREAS Montana is committed to providing quality education to help all students achieve graduation and their highest potential;

WHEREAS the senior Class of [insert year] has overcome many obstacles to reach graduation;

WHEREAS graduation is the completion of one goal and the beginning of many other goals;

WHEREAS graduation is cause to celebrate, we also celebrate the decisions and commitments students are making for their future;

WE THEREFORE NOW celebrate our students who are attending college, serving in the military, starting a career, or embarking on other new adventures.

I, [insert name], mayor of [name of city], Montana declare the first full week of May to be known as Decision Days, and urge all citizens to congratulate and celebrate the Senior Class of [insert year].

Signed this day of [insert Month, Day, Year]

[insert name], Mayor of [insert name of city], Montana.

MANY THANKS

To all who helped organize Decision Day celebrations at your school: **WE SINCERELY THANK YOU!** We recognize that the expertise you bring to your students, schools, and communities is invaluable in ensuring college access to Montana high school students.

We'd like to collect feedback to help us track progress and improve future events. Please watch for a survey in your inbox.

To see ideas and connect with schools beyond Montana, check out [COLLEGE SIGNING DAY](#).

On the following pages you'll find a FAFSA update with resources as well as a flyer and signs to print and display in your school.



FAFSA

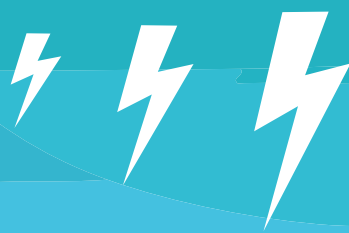
Many students who sign their acceptance letters or simply make the decision to attend college are still without a plan to pay for school. Decision Day events are ideal opportunities to remind students and families to complete the FAFSA. Your availability is at its highest until the end of the year, so now is the time to act...

As of April 5, 2024, just 26.4% of Montana seniors have completed the FAFSA, so accessing financial aid remains a critical issue for the state as we look to the 2024-25 school year. We understand that this year's FAFSA completion has been hindered by delays and issues, and your continued efforts are greatly appreciated. Please see the following resources as you work with students and families to complete FAFSA this year.

You can check your specific school's and/or district's completion status using the National College Attainment Network's [FAFSA TRACKER](#), review a concise explanation of the [FAFSA in its current state](#), and explore [resources to engage with students and families](#).



DECISION DAY



**MAY 6-10
2024**

celebrating
montana's
seniors

commit to college
accept a job
enlist for service

decide what's next
& share your plans



MONTANA
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM



**Apply
Montana**

Your launchpad to college & career



DECISION DAY MONTANA

I'M GOING TO



Your launchpad to college & career





DECISION DAY MONTANA

I'M GOING TO





I AM GOING TO COLLEGE



#MTDecisionDay



I AM GOING TO COLLEGE



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