

COLLEGE MATCH DAY HOST SITE IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Thank you for your commitment to participate in an exploratory and complementary college match and fit program for high school juniors this spring. This Implementation Guide is intended to help you plan a College Match Day for high school juniors.

The timeline, checklist, and referenced resources are recommendations. Each school will need to select what works best to support your juniors in building a college list.

PROGRAM CONCEPT

The American College Application Campaign is expanding its senior year strategies to provide stronger support and greater knowledge about the college-going process for high school juniors through a College Match Day program. This expansion targets all students, especially those from historically underrepresented backgrounds, such as low-income families, students of color, or the first in their family to go to college. By expanding the campaign, juniors will arrive more college-ready during senior year college application events by having a list of postsecondary options that match and fit their interests and learning goals, leading to more significant application completion.

COLLEGE MATCH DAY EXPECTATIONS

- Help high school juniors understand, match and fit language in college or postsecondary education selection.
- High school juniors have a college or postsecondary list written down in preparation for their senior year.
- Provide activities and support during the school day so that all students can participate.



CONSIDER FUNDRAISING SUPPORT

WHY FUNDRAISE FOR COLLEGE MATCH DAY?

IMPROVE YOUR EVENT SUCCESS

While additional financial support is not required for a successful College Match Day (CMD) event, extra resources can significantly enhance the experience for students and the broader community. Support from your school, alumni association, local Greek Letter Organizations, businesses, or community leaders can help elevate the event through added elements like food, decorations, swag, scholarships, or door prizes. Fundraising efforts can also open up new opportunities (food, scholarships, decorations, swag items, door prizes, etc.) to build excitement and deepen engagement, helping to advance the event's overall goals.

(please see the full fundraising toolkit for more information and support).



CHECKLIST

PLANNING & IDEATION	DEADLINE	NOTES
Identify a School Team to determine College Match Day approach best for your school, to build support, and to assist with event.		
Identify and reserve facilities for the event.		
Confirm event date(s) and add to school calendar.		
Inform school and district level staff about the event's purpose and goals.		
Schedule planning meetings with the team to brainstorm and discuss topics such as • What college and workforce exploration activities will be built into the College Match Day • How alumni, nonprofit organizations, employers, or community leaders could assist with the event. • Funding opportunities to support a comprehensive and inclusive event and environment for learners. (Food, Drinks, Decorations, Scholarship Opportunities, etc.,) • Timing of the event - whether it is in the fall/winter/spring, one day vs a week, etc.		

ONE MONTH BEFORE EVENT	DEADLINE	NOTES
Communicate opportunity to students and their families (i.e., letters, calls, text, school website, newsletter).		
Determine which activities juniors will do to research and identify schools. <i>*See suggested resources and activities included in this toolkit.</i>		
Develop and disseminate a pre-survey to gain insight into students' thoughts on college and workforce process perspectives. (See pre-survey template for example)		
Determine if volunteers are needed. - Identify potential volunteers - Identify tasks - Confirm any background check requirements		
Distribute informational materials in advance of event such as the "Build a Balanced College List" info sheet.		
Build awareness and enthusiasm school-wide. - College t-shirts/gear day - College interest bulletin boards "Ask Me!" signs on offices and classroom doors - Door decorating contests - Get active on social media		
Send reminder to students and their families (i.e., letters, calls, text, school website, newsletter).		
Check in with volunteers to confirm their assistance and provide reminder of when to arrive/how to check in at school office.		

ONE WEEK BEFORE EVENT	DEADLINE	NOTES
Meet with the event team to confirm all logistics and review the game plan for the day of the event. Lastly, complete any outstanding tasks.		
Ask teachers and staff to hang “Ask Me About” posters near classroom doors to encourage students to ask about where they attended college.		
Remind teachers and staff about the schedule and planned activities. Ensure all juniors will have the opportunity to participate.		
Gather event materials (pens, printed items, etc.)		
Ensure that data collection (sign-in sheets and post-surveys) has been created for the event(s). Leverage the national post-survey link below.		

ONE DAY BEFORE EVENT	DEADLINE	NOTES
Send reminder to students and their families (i.e., letters, calls, text, school website, newsletter).		
Remind teachers and staff to wear college gear.		

DAY OF EVENT	DEADLINE	NOTES
ENJOY YOUR EVENT!		
Welcome volunteers.		
Ensure students sign-in virtually or paper method.		
Be active on social media.		
Pass out “Summer Break: Next Steps” document to juniors.		
Provide Exit Ticket: post-survey (paper or QR code) - check out the Post Survey Template for an example.		

POST EVENT	DEADLINE	NOTES
Host a post-event debrief with the school team a week after the event.		
Schedule a meeting to provide a post-event debrief with the American College Application Campaign state coordinator two to three weeks after the event concludes.		
Write thank you letters to volunteers, if applicable. Include a data recap to ensure volunteers are aware of the outcome of the event.		
Thank students and their families via email, social media, school newsletter, etc. Include a data recap to ensure families and students are aware of the outcome of the event.		
Submit data to ACAC state campaign coordinator.		
Before last day of school, provide juniors with printed copy of their college list or remind students how to access their list, if saved in an app or web-based program. Remind them of "Next Steps."		
Based on activities hosted during CMD, print artifacts and hang around the school, if applicable.		



ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

To support your school in hosting a College Match Day event, we have gathered available resources ranging from lesson plans, informational handouts, interactive in-person activities, and independent reflection.

Purple denotes “low” level of time and resources.

Orange denotes “moderate” level of time and resources.

Green denotes “high” level of time and resources.

BUILD A BALANCED COLLEGE LIST (1-2 HOURS)

The info sheet is a one page summary of what it means to build a balanced college list. This should be used as a handout for students and families before the College Match Day activity or event. Ask students to review the info sheet, provide 5-10 minutes of reflection, and then provide 5-10 minutes of group questions and discussion.

Educators can utilize the slide deck to guide group discussion through college match and fit components that inform juniors about the anticipated college application process. This includes common terminology students will need to understand and review available resources to help them build their list.

WORKSHOPS AND INFORMATION SESSIONS (1-2 HOURS)

- **Topic:** Introduction to Postsecondary Options
Build a presentation that covers pathways such as community colleges, universities, trade schools, and apprenticeships.
Invite representatives from various postsecondary institutions to speak.
- **Topic:** College Application Process Overview
Walk through the college application process, including deadlines, essays, letters of recommendation, and test score submissions. Utilize the ACAC College Application Worksheet as a guiding tool.

ASK ME ABOUT IT POSTER

Encourage teachers and staff in your building to fill out the “Ask Me About It” poster and place it outside their classroom or office door. Having the posters hanging a week or two before your activity or event will open the door for conversations about different pathways.

RISING SENIOR – SUMMER BREAK NEXT STEPS INFO SHEET

This one pager should be provided to juniors after they complete the College Match Day activity(ies) or a few weeks before the last day of school. It provides information on steps the student can take during summer break to ensure they are ready to apply to college in their senior year.

STUDENT/FAMILY INFORMATION LETTER TEMPLATE

This letter can be used to inform students and their families about your planned College Match Day activity. Include specific information about your letter and how family members can be supportive or involved.

MY OPTIONS ENCOURAGE POSTSECONDARY PLANNING SURVEY – LESSON PLANS (2-4 HOURS)

This packet includes an interactive activity that helps students envision themselves in college and reflect on how their future career goals might include education beyond high school.

COLLEGE RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Understanding match, fit, and cost is critical to researching colleges. Students should use this document during the College Match Day event to help them research and identify the colleges to which they want to apply.

PEER TO PEER TABLE TALK

After seniors have declared their college decision, organize a junior/senior lunch hour meet up. Assign tables in the cafeteria a college and one to two seniors who have selected that college. Invite juniors to have lunch with the seniors and ask questions about why the senior chose that college.

COLLEGE VISITS (10+ HOURS)

Taking students on a campus visit gives them a first-hand experience to picture themselves as a college student and is an excellent way to demonstrate which educational opportunities are within their local community.

Visiting a local community college, state university, private school, and/or trade school within a one to two-hour drive can reasonably allow for a college visit during the school day.

COLLEGE MATCHING GAME: A FUN AND ENGAGING WAY TO EXPLORE POSTSECONDARY OPTIONS (2-4 HOURS)

The college matching game is an interactive activity to help students discover institutions that align with their academic interests, career goals, financial considerations, and personal preferences.

SINGLED OUT: COLLEGE EDITION (2-4 HOURS)

This activity uses the Singled Out gameplay to simulate a college search engine in an in-person, interactive opportunity to experience how a search engine uses students' interests to sift through thousands of colleges and produce a manageable list to research further. Utilize the ACAC Singled Out card templates or make your own.



FREE WEBSITES AND APPS FOR COLLEGE SEARCH

There are many college search apps and websites your students can use. The names most likely familiar to you are listed below. We recommend you pick one that is most familiar to you and preferred by your students. Having the students using the same platform will make the process less confusing and overwhelming. If you are already invested in a specific platform, stick with that. If not, here are some to consider:

- ACT AI Advisor - <https://www.act.org/ai>
- BigFuture - <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org>
- College Scorecard - <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov>
- College Navigator - <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>
- Encourage - <https://www.encourageme.com>
- Peterson's - <https://www.petersons.com/college-search.aspx>



DATA COLLECTION

To better support your students as they begin their senior year, and to strengthen your state college application campaign, tracking student participation data is essential. Collecting this data helps you identify which students are engaging with the process, uncover gaps in outreach, and tailor your support strategies accordingly. It also provides valuable insights to inform planning, measure impact, and demonstrate success to stakeholders. Ultimately, data empowers you to make informed decisions that improve outcomes for all students. Please see the CMD Data Collection Workbook that includes survey guidance and template sign-in/out forms.