



Exploration Tool Kit (Grades 6-12)

Develop opportunities for students to investigate the practical application of academic learning and 21st century skills in the real world. These lesson plans help students to discover their interests and strengths, and identify the educational steps needed to reach their career goals.

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College Exploration Lesson 1: College Treasure Hunt

Lesson Overview

Students explore key questions for college interests and consider personal preferences for different colleges and universities through this activity.

Opening Activity:

Brainstorm a Top 10 list for “What I want in a college.” This can be done in a small or large group. Debrief the activity, and have students consider that there may be other key questions and considerations for choosing a college.

Main Activity: College Treasure Hunt

1. Give every student a copy of “Your Map to Buried College Treasure” handout on page 29 of this resource:
http://www.nacacnet.org/research/PublicationsResources/Marketplace/Documents/SBS_MiddleSchool.pdf.
2. Review each of the areas with key questions on the map.
3. Ask students to complete the treasure maps on their own.
4. Discuss with students which “map points” were most important to them and why.
5. Divide students into groups. Provide college guidebooks and viewbooks (online or hard copy) to find information that would help them dig up information for their treasure map.
6. Have students share their findings.

Extending the Learning

- Personal Treasure Maps: Students create their own digital treasure maps, answering the key questions and choosing one college to highlight as their treasure.
Resource: <http://www.biteslide.com>
- Variation to the Treasure Map: Students draw their own treasure maps that feature the questions they have or the steps they will need to take to reach their treasure.



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College Exploration Lesson 2: Campus Tour

Lesson Overview

Students will explore important questions through a virtual or on-site campus tour.

Opening Activity

In small groups or as a whole group, students brainstorm about different aspects of the college campus. Time permitting, students can record or draw these aspects on chart paper.

Main Activity: Campus Tour

After debriefing the opening activity, students and staff may come up with a list of questions to explore at one or more colleges.

Sample questions:

1. What is the population (how many people) of the university?
2. Is it a public or private university?
3. How much is in-state tuition?
4. What is the percentage of women on campus? Men?
5. What types of degrees are offered? (i.e., associate's, bachelor's, master's, doctorate)?
6. What is the mascot?
7. What is the name of the admissions building?
8. What is the name of the main library?
9. Find and name a landmark or statue on the university campus and explain why it is special.

Extending the Learning

- If the initial activity was virtual, the follow-up activity can be a visit to a local college or a variety of campuses.
- Students can create a brochure or multimedia presentation that includes the highlights of the campus tour(s).
- Invite local college students to your program for a Q&A session or panel on college life.



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Career Exploration Lesson 1: O*Net Interest Profiler Connecting Interests to Possible Careers

Lesson Overview

Introduce the idea of connecting personal interests to career pursuits, and explain how the O*Net Interest Profiler works. After students have completed the O*Net Interest Profiler, they will learn how to research occupations of interest.

Opening Activity

Students stand in a circle. Invite everyone to think of a motion or gesture that represents something they like to do. Once participants are ready, go around the circle and have each person say their name and share the gesture. The participant says, "My name is _____, and I like to [does motion without saying anything]." The group repeats back: "Your name is _____, and you like to [do motion without saying anything]."

For example:

Participant: My name is Nora and I like to [does jogging motion in place].

Group: Your name is Nora and you like to [everyone does jogging motion in place].

Go around the circle until everyone has shared a name and motion.

Main Activity: Taking the O*Net Interest Profiler

Explain that people have a variety of interests and that career choices are often related to their personal interests. Students will take an assessment to learn more about their interests.

Note: If Internet access is not available for each student, these profiles can be printed ahead of time and taken in paper form. For full instructions and downloads, see <http://www.onetcenter.org/tools.html>.

1. Direct students to <http://www.mynextmove.org> on their computers, laptops or tablets.
2. Ask students to click on the Start button under the box that says, "I'm not sure."
3. Direct students through the next few screens, discussing the instruction screens as you go.
4. Give students time to take the Interest Profiler, which has 60 questions. Some students may need up to 30 minutes, but most will finish in 15 minutes or so.
5. Ask students to stop when they have completed the test questions unless they want to explore on their own. They need to be able to back up to the screen where they see their Job Zone results if they decide to work ahead.

Help students to analyze the results of their assessment, and then instruct students to select different Job Zones and explore the careers of interest.

Extending the Learning

- Students can create a collage about their various interests and potential careers.
- Students can write and illustrate a children's book that shows their various interests and potential careers.



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Career Exploration Lesson 2: O*Net Work Importance Profiler Connecting Your Work Values to Possible Careers

Lesson Overview

Besides interest, there is another aspect of work that plays a critical role in helping students find a career that is a good fit. For example, suppose you were very interested in music, and working in a music store came up as a possible career. But, you don't really like interacting with people. The O*Net Work Importance Profiler is an assessment tool that helps students find careers that suit their work styles, such as liking to work indoors or outdoors, with other people or alone. The teacher will introduce the concept of connecting the work environment to career pursuits, then explain how the O*Net Work Importance Profiler works. After the students have completed the O*Net Work Importance Profiler, they will learn how to research occupations of interest.

Opening Activity

The Work Importance Profiler measures six types of work values, or things you need in the workplace. The values are achievement, independence, recognition, relationships, support and working conditions.

Divide students into groups. Give each group the definition of a work value and have members brainstorm examples of it. (For example, Working conditions: Occupations that meet this work value offer job security and good working conditions such staying busy all the time, having something different to do every day, being paid well in comparison with other workers and having steady employment.)

Alternative Activity: Explain the definition of each value to the students, and have them rank their priorities. Discuss their reasoning. Explain that the O*Net Work Importance Profiler will provide more insight.

Main Activity: Taking the O*Net Work Importance Profiler

Note: If Internet access is not available for each student, these profiles can be printed ahead of time and taken in paper form. For full instructions and downloads, see <http://www.onetcenter.org/tools.html>.

1. Direct students to <http://www.onetcenter.org/WIP.html> on their computers, laptops or tablets.
2. Ask students to select Work Importance Profiler.
3. Direct students through the next few screens to get the Profiler ready to use, discussing the instruction screens as you go.
4. Give the students about 30 minutes to take the Work Importance Profiler.

Extending the Lesson

- Students create individual “All about Me” work profiles (on paper or digitally), incorporating the work values they discovered through the Work Importance Profiler.
- Students make an ad for their dream job based on their work values.



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Career Exploration Lesson 3: Online Career Exploration Search

Lesson Overview

Students will have an opportunity to strategically use O*Net tools to explore careers of interest by referring back to the results of their Interest Profiler and their Work Importance Profiler.

Opening Activity

Students write down at least three occupations of interest. If students need ideas, offer a list of potential occupations from a variety of career clusters.

Alternatively: Divide students up into groups. Students can act out their three occupations of interest and have their group members guess.

Main Activity: Research Occupations That Interest You

Teacher demonstrates use of the O*Net tools, using the “Occupation Research” handout (next page) questions as a guide. Students research at least three occupations of interest based on the results of the Interest Profiler and Work Importance Profiler.

Note 1: If students did not complete the lessons about the Interest Profiler and the Work Importance Profiler, you may want to show them these tools at the O*Net Career Exploration Tools website. Students can complete this lesson without doing career exploration research in advance, but these two assessments help them to narrow their research to occupations that they know fit their profile.

Note 2: Teachers need to get online and explore these websites themselves before class. Although these websites have been in existence for quite some time, their structure and navigation change frequently to accommodate the latest information and tools. This lesson will point out high-level content that is always part of these websites, but you need to be able to show students where this information is and how to access it because the websites change over time.

Debrief: What occupations did you explore and what were your findings?

As students share, be sure to point out key information that might help them pursue this occupation, and also draw attention to important information they might have missed. Encourage them in their job research, and offer available resources to help them get started on their career journey.

Extending the Lesson

- Students can create a how-to guide for pursuing their careers of interests.
- Students can act out a play or create a documentary that shows the career pathway or “a day in the life” of careers of interests.
- Students can create a class newspaper or class yearbook that details the future career goals of each student in the program.



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Occupation Research

Name: _____

Occupation Researched: _____

1. Is this a Bright Outlook occupation?
2. Look over the information, such as Knowledge, Skills, Personality and Technology. Does the information seem to fit your interests?
3. What education would you need?
4. Where would you find training?
5. Is there an apprenticeship program for this occupation?
6. What is the national average salary?
7. What is the average salary for your state?
8. What is the outlook for your state for this occupation? (found under Salary if available)
9. Are there related occupations that might interest you more than this one? If so, what are they?



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Career Exploration Lesson 4: Job Shadowing

Lesson Overview

Students will have an opportunity to follow an employee on the job and learn exactly what he or she does. This lesson will require students to meet at a workplace to perform a job shadow. Ideally, select a location where students can divide into small groups and shadow different types of employees, such as a manufacturing plant or a large office that employs many types of employees. Alternatively, some students could job shadow an entrepreneur and his/her employees. Also, prior to the job shadow, speak with the person who will be shadowed to make sure they understand the process. Generally, they should explain their job at a very high level at the beginning of the job shadow. Then they should demonstrate the tasks they perform during a typical work day so students get a realistic picture of all aspects of the job.

Opening Activity: Explain How Job Shadowing Works

Prior to the actual job shadow, secure a meeting place at the job site where you can prepare the students.

Say: Your role today is one of detective. You are trying to find out everything an employee does on the job for the purpose of deciding if this is a job you would like to have. You will actually be following an employee around as he or she performs the job tasks. This person will explain the job at a high level, then begin showing you the key tasks associated with the job. As you watch, be sure to take notes about what interests you and what you think you would not like doing. Also, don't be afraid to ask questions about anything you do not understand. Refer to your handout to make sure you ask key questions that might help you discover information about the job. Lastly, respect the employee's time and workspace – don't touch anything and don't wander away from the group. Keep focused on the person speaking, and thank him or her for taking time with you!

Main Activity: Job Shadow

During this step, students will perform the job shadow with the employee(s), using the "Job Shadow Guide" and taking notes for later review. If possible, students can also document the job shadowing with video or camera.

Ask the students: What occupations did you explore and what were your findings? As students share, be sure to point out key information that might help them pursue this occupation, and also draw attention to important information they might have missed. Encourage them in their job research, and offer available resources to help them get started on their career journey.

Extending the Lesson:

- Job shadowing can take much more than the allotted lesson time. If students show a great interest in the employee they shadowed, help them set up a time when they can return for a more thorough job shadow, or set up another job shadow with an employee in an occupation that interests them.
- Students can create a multimedia presentation or movie capturing the highlights or lessons learned.



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Job Shadow Guide

Name of Employee: _____

Occupation Shadowed: _____

1. What are the key tasks of this occupation?
2. What tasks did I find interesting and why?
3. What tasks do I think I would enjoy and why?
4. What tasks would I not like and why?
5. Additional notes: