



Tips for Infusing College and Career Readiness Into Your Program

Using creative, project-based learning elements in your out-of-school time program is a great way to give youth real-life college and career readiness experiences while they participate in activities that already interest them. It's about tapping into young people's natural excitement and curiosity, and connecting those to explorations of college and careers.

Use ideas from the following examples to create your own projects or experiences. Or, use these ideas to brainstorm about your own program. Be creative, and make connections for and with youth.

Service-Learning

Connect youth to projects that have positive impacts on local communities. If youth are already planning to sponsor a fund-raising drive for a local charity, some college and career readiness connections could include the following:

- **Have youth develop a project plan and budget for the fund-raising event.** What is the target students want to reach for income? What is the average gift/donation they will need to receive to meet that? What materials are needed, and what do they cost?
- **Reach out to the local nonprofit that will receive the funds, and have some of their staff members come and work with the students.** These staff can present the mission of the organization and discuss budgeting and fundraising strategies. Youth can present and discuss their plans with staff members, and discuss joint outreach plans. Staff can also talk about their own college and career paths, what skills are necessary, the job application and job search processes, and more.
- **Connect with a local college or university program (such as nonprofit management or MBA) and have a faculty member or graduate students meet with the youth.** Youth can present their plans and have them critiqued. Have the higher education partners talk about their own career and educational journeys.
- **If possible, have the students go to the nonprofit and the college for the sessions discussed above.** When the project is complete, have students present their funds and give a report to the benefitting organization or board of directors. College admissions offices will gladly make a presentation about college entrance, financial aid, or so on, and gear the presentation to the age group. Sometimes, colleges will have funds to help transport youth to and from the college.

Arts

Whether working on quality craft projects or working with teaching artists or organizations to lead theater and arts projects, give students an opportunity to showcase their talents for the larger community. This can be an important connection to college and career pathways. Here are some ideas:

- **Youth can create and staff their own event to exhibit or showcase their work.** From beginning to end, have them plan it and make it happen.





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- **Get working and professional artists to share their insights.** Your professionals might respond to students' plans for an exhibition or event. Or, have the professionals come in as "teaching artists" for a project or even for an ongoing afterschool or summer program. Be sure to have the artists share their career and educational journeys with the youth.
- **Host the exhibit in a professional arts space — or a college.** Reach out to a gallery owner about hosting the event and giving youth a presentation on various ways to display and exhibit their work. Coordinate with a local college or art school to host the event there. Could students use a stage or studio on campus to display and perform their work? Arrange for a presentation on college entrance requirements so youth know what it takes to gain admission. This will give students exposure to real life after high school, and will help the gallery owner or the arts program connect with potential new patrons.
- **Make it big.** You want to generate buzz about the youth and your program as a whole. Have youth develop an outreach plan and promotional materials, set up the display space, greet and manage the crowd as it arrives, and so on. Have an event promoter share some tricks of the trade, and also share with young people how to get into that industry. Consider having youth "sell" their work at the event to raise funds to support afterschool programs or another cause.
- **Add to the learning.** Youth can create a website or blog to promote the event, so they become more tech savvy. They can post pictures of their work and the event on the site, so they begin and expand their personal portfolios.



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STEM/ STEAM

Citizen science projects can be an excellent way to teach STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) concepts while young people work for and in support of real projects, businesses, universities and researchers. (The “A” in STEAM stands for the arts.) These projects are available for all age groups and in many topic areas, and they can happen in one afternoon or over the course of weeks. Many — but not all — do require special skills or materials. If youth are already engaged in a citizen science project, there are many ways to make the college and career readiness connections explicit.

- **What’s my impact?** Youth can find out how the data they contribute are used in the field.
- **How does citizen science work? Define the career path.** Youth can research the field they are working to support. Help them understand how they are effective citizen scientists/contributors, even with little or no training. How does that compare to the training the study designers have?
- **Build a connection.** Set up a Skype conversation or Twitter chat with someone at the organization that benefits from your program’s contribution. Work with local STEM program providers to lead projects for youth and create an ongoing afterschool or summer learning program.
- **Field trip!** Visit an organization in the same industry as your citizen science project. (Are you working to cure cancer? Set up a visit to a local teaching hospital. Interested in how the website for your project keeps going? Visit a marketing department for a website.) Set up a visit to a college campus, and check out the science labs and programs. The admissions office would love to share information with budding STEM or STEAM professionals.
- **Teach it.** Have young people give a presentation about citizen science opportunities to their families. Set up a community competition around the number of people the youth in your program can get to participate in citizen science projects.
- **Debate it. Share it. Solve it.** Ask youth to critique the citizen science limitations. How could citizen science educators make this work more appealing and exciting? Have youth share their thoughts with the project organizers in a professional way.
- **Make connections for youth from under-represented communities.** Women and minority STEM professionals will often have organizations and affinity groups for networking. Ask members to make a presentation to youth about their personal education and career pathways and connections to colleges and universities.

Youth Entrepreneurship

Career paths are being redefined. Professionals will likely work for many different organizations and in several fields over their lifetimes. The youth you serve may or may not start their own businesses but all will need an entrepreneurial mind-set to thrive. Projects that help youth to explore what it means to be an entrepreneur can be exciting, realize that working for yourself is a real option and help youth earn real money, right now.



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Here are a few easy ways to explore entrepreneurship in a “real” way.

1. **Give youth small loans for a simple investment.** Allow them to purchase materials with the investment. Then guide youth as they create a business plan that includes ways to sell their product for a profit.
2. **Lemonade stand anyone?** Do a youth entrepreneurship fair at your program and invite community members. Have students advertise the event in the neighborhood. Connect them with other entrepreneur programs (or start programs at your site).
3. **If you build it...** Discuss businesses that youth might have already, or may be trying to start at home. Do they get paid for walking a neighbor’s dog or doing yard work? Are they using their technology skills to help others build websites or blogs? How can they build their skill set in this area — and grow these opportunities as entrepreneurs? Have youth share their ideas with one another and offer each other advice.
4. **Bring in the experts.** Have people (especially young people) who have started entrepreneurial ventures come in to speak with youth about how they started their businesses. Youth could present their business models and get feedback from the experts.

Connecting College and Career Readiness

- **“Famous Entrepreneurs:”** Research your favorite companies and learn about the founders.
- **Visit a college.** Have youth speak with students and faculty in business and entrepreneur development. Here, students can present and discuss their own ideas for starting their businesses.