

Career Exploration Activities

9 Engaging Career Exploration Activities to Introduce in Your K-12 Classrooms



xello

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Are you looking to implement career exploration activities into your classroom? You've come to the right place.

Our step-by-step lessons will help you feel prepared as you introduce students to career exploration, which will in turn boost their confidence as learners and help them acquire future-ready skills.



But First, What is Career Exploration?

Career exploration is just that: exploring the many careers, possibilities, and pathways that the world has to offer.

You may be thinking: "But <u>65% of children</u> entering elementary school will end up in jobs that don't even exist yet!"

Our response? Exactly.

It's important for students to be in tune with their interests, strengths, and preferred school subjects. When students have a good understanding of themselves, they can start solving the puzzle of what they want their future to look like. They can then prepare for this future by setting goals, choosing courses, and focusing on extracurricular activities that support that dream.

When educators embed career exploration into the framework of every child's education, students begin connecting the dots between what they're learning and how it's applicable to their future.

We use the term "explore" because, as educators know, kids and young adults are on a journey to discover who they are not only as a student, but as a contributing member to society. And when they have a good understanding of the working world, they can imagine how they might fit into it someday.



So now that we've talked high-level, let's get down to what career exploration actually looks like in the classroom.

Career Exploration IS

- Scaffolded and age-appropriate for learners of all abilities.
- The reflection and development of one's own interests, strengths, skills, values, and preferences.
- Learning about fields of study, industries, and specific occupations.
- Creating short and long term goals to achieve post-graduation success.
- Recognizing that everyone's pathway may be different, and determining what fit is best.
- Understanding the connection between school courses and the working world.

Career Exploration IS NOT

- Predicting what career a child will choose.
- Suilting students into completing assignments in order to be successful down the road.
- Pigeon-holing oneself into a career pathway due to grades or parental pressure.
- Telling students that they must go to college to have a fulfilling career.

Since you are one of their guides on this exploratory journey, equip yourself with the knowledge that, like any adventure, there will be twists and turns along the way. But by prioritizing your students' needs and development, you will be positioning them for a better future.



CASE STUDY

How the School District of Lancaster Uses Xello to Engage Students in Future Readiness Activities Read Their Story



Xello's Commitment to Students and Families

We at Xello are committed to fostering career exploration in your students. We believe this journey should start as early as elementary school and build all the way through high school graduation. By doing so, students develop a better sense of self and position themselves for future success.

We also recognize that it takes a village to change the ways students view themselves, their studies, and the workforce. That's why it's important to get families involved (and excited!) about career exploration for their children.

This could look like:



Welcoming families to Xello.

Be sure to send home Xello's introduction letter explaining the software and the importance of college and career planning.



Providing additional resources.

Sending home books and sharing videos showcasing characters that have different careers, and creating discussion questions to guide family conversations.



Involving children in household tasks and chores.

Encouraging families to task children with responsibilities and age-appropriate chores around the house to learn more about likes and dislikes, as well as promote executive functioning skills.



Helping parents and guardians set up their family Xello account.

When families can see and use the software, it provides yet another opportunity to support career exploration and discuss future goals and plans with their child.



Further Benefits to Career Exploration

Need further convincing that career exploration positively impacts students? Below are additional results to investing in college and career readiness programs, implementing future-ready activities, and partnering with families:



- Improved engagement
- Strengthened self-esteem
- Higher graduation rates
- Refined executive functioning skills

- Higher achievement levels
- Reduce absenteeism
- Matured social-emotional learning skills

How to Make the Most of Our Career Exploration Activities

We have created three age-appropriate career exploration activities for students in elementary, middle, and high school. For each activity we've provided a focus, instructional planning suggestions, and lesson delivery instructions. Following each activity, we've recommended enrichment opportunities to increase students' depth-of-knowledge.

We have also aligned Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Mindsets & Behaviors to each lesson. Please note that the CCSS have been chosen for a particular grade level, but you can adjust the standards accordingly.

Like any cooking recipe, lesson plans are a jumping off point. We encourage you to make the activities your own, altering what you see fit to best engage your students.

Let's get started!



Career Exploration Activities for Elementary Students



Elementary Students

Activity 1

Create a "Me Collage"

Create a "Me Collage"



Activity Overview

Students will create a personal collage to help identify their interests, strengths, traits, and other characteristics. Students will be able to reflect on the diversity of peers and respect others' interests.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences	M 2. Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment B-SS 2. Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them B-SMS 3. Independent work

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Brown craft paper or poster board
- Crayons, pencils, pens, and markers
- Old magazines, picture books, and catalogues
- Glue or glue sticks
- Colored construction paper
- Scissors



Create a "Me Collage"



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

With your class, brainstorm different information that students can include in their collages by asking questions such as:

- What activities do you do in your free time?
- What games or sports do you like to play?
- What music do you like?
- What's your favorite food?
- What do you like to learn about at school?
- What are you really good at?
- Who are your friends?
- Do you have any pets?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Do you have any brothers or sisters?



Step 2

Once students have reflected on their interests, strengths, experiences, and relationships, there are endless ways to approach creating a collage. You could have students lie down on a sheet of brown craft paper while a partner traces them (with your help) and helps them cut out their silhouette, or you can ask students to draw a picture of themselves and write their name in the center of a piece of poster board.

Step 3

When the paper has been prepared, students can draw or cut out pictures that represent their interests, strengths, feelings, traits, relationships, and experiences and glue them to the paper. Make sure students don't leave large blank spaces between their images.



Create a "Me Collage"



Step 4

After the collages are complete, each student can explain their collage to the rest of the class. Ask students to point out examples of similarities and differences in their collages.



Step 5

Explain that it's important to respect people's differences—it's what makes them unique—and ask for examples of how to be respectful. Encourage students to practice raising their hands and asking clarifying questions to show interest.

Enrichment Opportunities

- Display these in the hallway for everyone to see! Organize a walk around the school to learn about peers and also admire their creativity and individualism.
- 2 File this away in a time capsule. Kids will love seeing these years down the road!



Elementary Students

Activity 2

Career Discovery: Tools for a Job

Career Discovery: Tools for a Job



Activity Overview

Students will learn that every career has tools to get the job done. Students will use critical thinking skills, as well as possible research, to determine what tools are used for which jobs.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.4	B-LS 1.
Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question	Critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Presentation slides with each slide showcasing a different tool (example: baking sheet of cookies, bulldozer, stethoscope, space shuttle)
- Career Book (suggestions: <u>The ABCs of What I Can</u>
 <u>Be, Clothesline Clues to Jobs People Do, and</u>
 <u>Whose Tools are These?</u>)
- Student computers or construction paper, writing utensils, crayons, and markers



Career Discovery: Tools for a Job



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

With your class, determine the definition of a job. Tell students that every job has tools to help them be successful. Ask them what a tool is and for examples of tools.

Step 2

Read one of the suggested books above to help students start connecting tools to careers.

Step 3

Brainstorm with your class what tools are needed for different people at school. Roles to consider:

- Students
- Teachers
- Cafeteria workers
- Principals
- Assistants
- Custodians
- Specials/Arts teachers



Step 4

Before you present the slideshow, set the expectation that all guessers need to raise their hand and not shout out the answer. Slide by slide, ask the class what job matches the tool on the screen. Feel free to include some ones that have multiple answers, such as a handsaw or swimming goggles! This will generate discussion, and students can practice being respectful of other ideas.

Career Discovery: Tools for a Job



Lesson Delivery

Step 5

After working through the slide show, students will make "slides" of their own. If they know how to do one on the computer, they can create one matching your model. Alternatively, they can hand-draw their tools on a piece of paper.

Step 6

Finally, have students present one-by-one to the class to see what careers and tools are being showcased!

Enrichment Opportunities

- Switching slides with other classes in the building to learn about other jobs not discussed in your room.
- Creating slides for a character in a book. What tools and accessories best describe who they are, what they believe in, and what they do?



Elementary Students

Activity 3

Family Careers

Family Careers



Activity Overview

Students will learn what an interview is using the "I Do, We Do, You Do" method. Students will be able to interview a family member or family friend regarding their career. Students will practice writing in a Q & A format and present their findings to the class.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2.3 Ask and answer questions about what a	B-SS 1. Effective oral and written communication
speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.	skills and listening skills

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Age-appropriate interview video (such as <u>this one</u> or <u>this one</u>)
- Timer
- Printed Q & A sheets for students to take home (potentially digital copies to email home to parents as well)



Family Careers



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Explain to your students that they are being given the job of an interviewer. Define for students what an interview is and what the roles of an interviewer and interviewee are. Brainstorm (and write on the board) some ideas an interviewer can ask to learn more about the other person. Questions could include:

- What is your favorite part about school?
- Who is in your family?
- Where is your favorite place?
- What do you like to do at recess?
- What did you eat for breakfast this morning?
- What shows do you like to watch?



Step 2

Once all students comprehend the idea of an interview, it is time to watch one in action! Before the video begins, identify who is asking the questions and who is answering them to better help students follow along.

Step 3

If you choose, have the class reflect together on what they saw, including:

- Who was asking most of the questions?
- Did the person answering answer in one word, or did they use at least one sentence?
- Where were the people looking when they were talking?

Step 4

Pair up the students and designate who is Partner 1 and who is Partner 2. Remind them of the questions the class generated earlier (that are still on the board). Set the timer for one minute, and have Partner 1 ask Partner 2 a question. The question can be from earlier, or one thought of on their own. Partner 1 will be the interviewer until the timer goes off. For the next minute, Partner 2 is the interviewer.

Family Careers



Lesson Delivery

Step 6

Once everyone has had a turn, explain that students will be continuing this activity at home. They will be interviewing a family member or family friend about what their job is using the questions on the worksheet. Leave a blank space at the bottom to encourage students to record their own questions as well! Some questions to include on the worksheet are:

- What is your job?
- Did you always want to do this job?
- What do you like about this job?
- What is hard about this job?
- What tools do you use to do this job?
- What outfit do you wear to do this job?



Step 7

Once interviews are completed, give students the opportunity to share their interviews with the class before turning them in.

Enrichment Opportunities

- Hang interviews in the hallway to display to the school.
- Organize a sign-up for family members to either visit the classroom or join a Zoom call talking about their job. These speakers could join the class throughout the school year or on one career-focused day!
- 3 Have students create a video or a FlipGrid of their interview for classmates to watch.
- Encourage a "dress up" or "show-and-tell" day to make career presentations come to life.





Career Exploration Activites for Middle School Students



Middle School Students

Activity 1

Discover Your Favorite Career Cluster

Discover Your Favorite Career Cluster



Activity Overview

Students will research a company or brand of their choice to discover the careers within the organization. Students will understand how companies have many positions that require a variety of interests, skills, and responsibilities.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.1	B-LS 4.
Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	Self-motivation and self- direction for learning
	B-LS 5.
	Media and technology skills to enhance learning

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- A website of your choice as an example
- Laptop
- Access to internet



Discover Your Favorite Career Cluster



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Explain to the class that for an organization or event to run smoothly, a lot of people --all with different skills and responsibilities-- need to be involved. Brainstorm with your class an example, writing on the board to display your findings.

One such example could be a football game. Who else is crucial besides the players? Have students come up with ideas who would help or be in charge of certain aspects. Need help? Consider:

- Uniforms
- Refereeing
- Scoreboard
- Tickets
- Concessions
- Field lights
- Water and ice
- Injured players



Step 2

Now that students understand that a lot of work and planning goes into a brand, it is time to dive into an example of what that looks like on a company website.

Step 3

Project a website of your choosing to the class. Notice the language on the page. What does it say about the company's values? For example, the Dove website showcases people of all shapes, sizes, and skin colors. This shows that they believe that there is not one standard of beauty.

Discover Your Favorite Career Cluster



Lesson Delivery

Step 4

Next, show students how to search for jobs within the company. Take them through a few of the job openings, noting the responsibilities and tasks for each.

Step 5

After their research is done, have students write a reflection on what they've discovered, citing specific evidence from the website. Guiding questions could include:

- What does this company value, and what makes you think this?
- What positions are they hiring for? Choose two and explain their differences.

Enrichment Opportunity



If your students use Xello, task them with updating their profile to reflect any key takeaways from the activity.



Middle School Students

Activity 2

Unconscious Biases in the Workplace

Unconscious Biases in the Workplace



Activity Overview

Students will learn about and reflect upon unconscious bias surrounding different professions.



Common Core State Standards ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D

Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

B-LS 9.

Decision-making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias

B-SS 7.

Leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse groups

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Poster board and markers for each group
- Class list divided into groups
- List of chosen professions (such as chef, surgeon, athlete, car mechanic, custodian, professor, firefighter)



Unconscious Bias Definition:

The thoughts and feelings that we have about social groups that can influence our decision-making and our actions even when we're not aware of it.



SUGGESTED TEACHER PRE-READING

Managing unconscious bias and talking to kids about race

Read Their Story

Unconscious Biases in the Workplace



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Divide students into small groups, scattered around the room. Every group should be equipped with a poster board with a profession written at the top, along with markers.

Step 2

Within their groups, students will write down everything that comes to mind about someone within this profession, including gender, age, ethnicity, family life, clothing, and hobbies. (For better organization, encourage students to create titled sections or a web to capture their thoughts).

Step 3

Once all groups have completed the activity, explain the concept of unconscious bias.

Step 4

Students should review their work, making revisions in a different color marker to show changes and shifts in viewpoint.

Enrichment Opportunities

- Have students visit websites for certain occupations and analyze the images displayed.

 For example, does the local hospital's photographs support or challenge the students' list they generated for a nurse?
- Assign a reflection piece tied to this activity. What have students learned, and how can these lessons be applied to their life currently?



Middle School Students

Activity 3

Interview a Professional

Interview a Professional



Activity Overview

Students will proactively seek a family friend or school staff member to gather information about a career.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D	B-SS 3. Positive relationships with adults to support success
Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.	

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Q&A worksheet, half filled with questions and half blank for students to write in their own
- Secure a list of teachers willing to be interviewed by students.



Interview a Professional



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Assign a quick-write to students, having them generate a list of adults they know and what jobs they hold.

Step 2

Introduce the activity: Students will be interviewing a professional, preferably not someone from their immediate family. Students can use the adults from the quick-write as a jumping off point, or can choose someone entirely different.

Step 3

Pass out the Q&A worksheet with detailed questions, including:

- What educational requirements were needed to acquire your job?
- What was your personal career path?
- What are your day-to-day responsibilities?
- What are some aspects you like about your career?
- What are some challenges within your role?



Interview a Professional



Lesson Delivery

Step 4

Give students time to brainstorm some remaining questions to ask, although they may be more inspired during the actual interview.

Step 5

Once all interviews have been conducted, there are a lot of options on how to continue. Students could share their findings in small groups, switch completed interviews to read with classmates, or share two things they learned with the class, using specific examples. This could also become a full-blown presentation, complete with visuals, note cards, and direct quotes.

Enrichment Opportunities

- Encourage a "dress up" or "show-and-tell" day to make career presentations come to life.
- If students use Xello, have them compare and contrast their interview to the profession's description on Xello.



High School Students

Career Exploration Activities for High School Students



High School Students

Activity 1

Create Your Own Pathway

Create Your Own Pathway



Activity Overview

Students will research post-secondary schools and programs that are determined as a good fit.



CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem. B-LS 9. Understanding that postsecondary education and life-long learning are necessary for long-term success B-SS 7. Independent work

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Students will need a device in order to log into Xello and additional school websites.
- If your district uses Xello, it is recommended that students have completed the "Program Prospects" and "Choosing a College" lessons within the platform before completing this activity.
- It is important to note that not all students will be going to college. Therefore, it's important to think about the positioning of the questions. Instead of solely focusing on college, discuss programs, trainings, and apprenticeships as well.



Create Your Own Pathway



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

With your class, brainstorm a list of factors that help filter post-secondary programs. Write these on the board. For example:

- Size of school
- Class sizes
- Distance from home
- Religious
- Accepted genders
- Public or Private
- Cost & Scholarships
- Majors and Minors
- Sports
- Greek Life
- City, Suburb, or Rural



Step 2

Students should rank or place an asterisk by which factors are the most important to them.

• Students using Xello should have already curated a list of important factors for postsecondary school in the "Choosing a College" lesson.



Create Your Own Pathway



Lesson Delivery

Step 3

Students will research schools and individual program pages to find future paths that seem a good fit. Most program pages will identify careers aligned with certain majors, perhaps sparking an interest in students. If applicable, students can also use the Xello search portal and save their choices for future reference.



TEACHER TIP

Model how students can find and access information online. Have students practice searching through local library online resources, <u>College Board</u>, and job postings for those heading straight to the workforce.

Enrichment Opportunity



Incorporate a letter-writing assignment into this activity. After students research a specific program, discuss the requirements of a formal letter. Students will write a letter to the school asking to receive more information about potential opportunities.



High School Students

Activity 2

Job Interview Role Play



Activity Overview

Students will learn the expectations of a job interview and practice the necessary skills to successfully complete one.



Common Core State Standards	ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.A	B-SS 9.
Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study;	Social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment
explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other	B-SS 8.
research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of	Advocacy skills for self and others and ability to assert self, when necessary
ideas.	

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- Videos on Interviews (such as <u>this one</u>, <u>this one</u>, and <u>this one</u>)
- Interview Questions
- We suggest splitting this activity up between three days to ensure expectations are set and quality work is completed.





Lesson Delivery

Day 1: Introduce the Interview

Step 1:

Acknowledge that interviews can be nerve wracking, which is why this is a low-stakes assignment. The goal is to boost student confidence and to learn how to position oneself to be the best candidate for the job.

Step 2:

We suggest watching a mixture of comedic and informational interview videos, as shared above. Videos should include different types of interview questions, as well as age-appropriate tips and tricks.



Step 3:

With the class, reflect on the videos.

- What did the interviewee do well?
- What types of questions were asked?
- What did you notice about body language?
- For informational videos: How can you apply what was discussed?

Step 4:

If there is time, play a game that forces students to think quickly on their feet and practice speaking in front of others. While there are many available, try here, and <





Lesson Delivery

Day 2: Prepare for the Interview

Step 5:

Students will determine for which role they will be interviewing.

Step 6:

Distribute the list of interview questions students are expected to prepare for.

Step 7:

Allot time for research. Encourage students to look on Xello, as well as job postings and descriptions, to determine necessary skills and educational requirements.

Step 8:

Students should practice answering questions from the accumulated research.

Day 3: Interviews

Step 9:

There are multiple ways to set up interviews in your classroom:

- Pair up students and have them interview one another in a set time frame.
- Have students rotate after a certain time limit so they are speaking to different students, and therefore different interviewers, throughout the period.
- Have an option for group interviews. One student can interview a group of candidates going for the same job.
 Alternatively, one person could be interviewed by a group of people.





Lesson Delivery

Day 3: Interviews

Step 10:

Allow for reflection afterward. What did the interviewee think were their strengths and weaknesses? What did the interviewer notice?

Enrichment Opportunities

- Lead a discussion on appropriate attire for interviews.
- Seek teachers in the building who would be willing to conduct mock interviews. After practicing with peers, students would then be interviewed by staff to provide an even more professional experience.



High School Students

Activity 3

Job Shadowing

Job Shadowing



Activity Overview

Students will seek out job shadowing opportunities in order to get hands-on experience at a job site.



Common Core State Standards ASCA Mindsets & Behaviours CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.D M 5. Establish and maintain a formal style and Belief in using abilities to their fullest to objective tone while attending to the achieve high-quality results and outcomes norms and conventions of the discipline in B-SS 3. which they are writing. Positive relationships with adults to support success B-SS 3. Positive relationships with adults to support success

Instructional Planning

Materials Needed:

- All students should have access to a device to research and email.
- Video on Job Shadowing (such as <u>this one</u>).

This activity may spread into two days, depending on the amount of time needed for research.



Job Shadowing



Lesson Delivery

Step 1

Watch a video on job shadowing in, such as the one suggested above.

Step 2

As a class, review the benefits of job shadowing.

Step 3

Students should choose a career they are interested in pursuing.

Step 4

Next, task students with brainstorming trusted adults they know in that profession. They may also research local companies in the community to find additional opportunities.

Step 5

Students will craft an email requesting a job shadowing opportunity. They may need to locate or acquire the appropriate email address after school in order to complete this step.

Job Shadowing



Lesson Delivery

Step 6

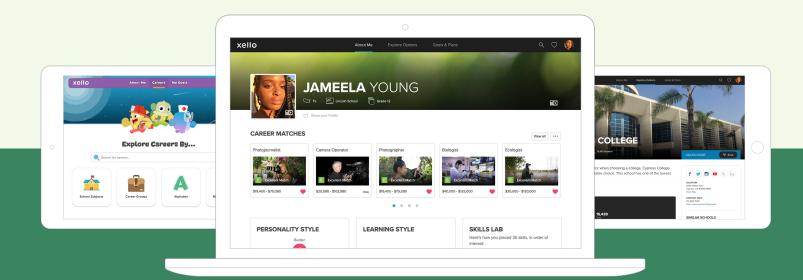
Remind students of formal email etiquette. Students may need to send a practice email or receive teacher approval before pressing "Send." Email etiquette includes:

- Emailing from school email address
- Short and focused subject line
- Salutations
- Proper grammar and spelling
- Block paragraphs
- Link to resume, if applicable

Enrichment Opportunities

- Task (as a grade-level or building initiative) students to actually shadow a parent, family member, or family friend at their place of employment! Students can report back on responsibilities, needed skills, and key takeaways.
- Organize students to volunteer running the school spirit store, selling tickets and concessions, and ushering at school plays. This will give students real-life experience with responsibilities and interacting with customers.

xello



Turn Student Dreams into Future Realities

Discover How Xello Takes Career Exploration to the Next Level

Book My Demo

xello.world

Conclusion



Conclusion

Our activities are designed to inspire all types of learners in the classroom. You may find that students who are timid or disinterested with school work enjoy and excel at college and career planning.

Be sure to share your successes with us via email or on social media to promote the importance of career exploration at all ages!

