

Career Expo

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Time Frame 700 minutes

Essential Question(s)

How can your community help support your goal of expanding opportunities for students while increasing postsecondary education (PSE) awareness?

Summary

The Career Expo provides an opportunity for students to meet with representatives across 16 different career clusters. Postsecondary institutions and community leaders will provide students with a broad overview of numerous careers and postsecondary programs. Students will learn about careers in business and industry, in-demand occupations, and the role business and industry play in communities. Students will complete an activity during the expo to document the information learned at each table they visit, as well as a post-activity reflection to plan next steps for further career exploration in specific areas of interest.

Learning Goals

- Plan and facilitate a Career Expo to host local community partners.
- Assist students in gaining insights into different career paths and industries from local community business partners and postsecondary institutions (PSIs).

Attachments

- Career Cluster Cards—Career Expo.docx
- Career Cluster Cards—Career Expo.pdf
- Career Expo Gym Set-Up—Career Expo.docx
- Career Expo Gym Set-Up—Career Expo.pdf
- During Expo Bingo!—Career Expo - Spanish.docx
- During Expo Bingo!—Career Expo - Spanish.pdf
- During Expo Bingo!—Career Expo.docx
- During Expo Bingo!—Career Expo.pdf
- Email Templates—Career Expo.docx
- Email Templates—Career Expo.pdf
- Sample Agenda—Career Expo.docx
- Sample Agenda—Career Expo.pdf
- Sample Poster—Career Expo.pdf
- Volunteer Guide—Career Expo.docx
- Volunteer Guide—Career Expo.pdf
- Volunteer Table Tent—Career Expo.docx
- Volunteer Table Tent—Career Expo.pdf

Materials

- Sample Agenda/Schedule handout (attached; optional)
- Tables
- Bingo stamp/sticker (optional; one per volunteer)
- Pens/Pencils
- Sample Poster (attached; optional)
- Hardwood floor tarp (optional)
- Volunteer Table Tent handout (attached; one per volunteer)
- Career Expo Project Plan sheets (linked; optional)
- Email Templates handout (attached)
- Volunteer Guide (attached)
- During Expo BINGO! handout (attached; printed double-sided, one per student)
- Career Expo Gym Set-Up handout (attached)
- Career Cluster Cards handout (attached)

180 minutes

Planning Phase

Planning a Career Expo is an important first step for K-12 students to explore future educational and career opportunities. Hosting a Career Expo brings community partners from different colleges, universities, trade schools, and businesses to a centralized location for your students to learn valuable postsecondary information. Additionally, Career Expos give students a chance to workshop essential skills like communication, resume building, and interviewing.

Creating a Committee (optional)

During your planning phase, first, you should consider forming a committee to help with the overall logistics of the event. This can include: planning any student prep work; securing a date, time, and location; contacting volunteers; setting up/breaking down the expo; and communicating with classroom teachers for release.

Facilitator's Note: Project Planning Organizer

Consider using this optional Career Expo Project Plan as a starting point to organize the different tasks and supplies needed for your event.

Event Logistics

Now that you have your committee, figure out the logistics of your event including: location, time, date, etc. Consider adapting the attached **Sample Agenda** to meet your needs. Once you have your logistics in mind, make sure to reserve your space ahead of time. You may also consider providing lunch for your volunteers, so plan that ahead of time as well.

Recruiting Volunteers

When you have the logistics figured out, it's time to recruit volunteers for your expo event. This can be done in multiple ways but consider the following resource you can use to pool contacts from your peers:

Career Professional Volunteer Referral - Use this resource to collect information from your colleagues and other local organizations. Be sure to insert the specific details related to your school.

Once you have collected contact information for potential career partners, you can use the attached **Email Templates** (seen below as well) to assist in the recruitment of volunteers. If your contact was provided by a peer, be sure to include them in the email, or allow them to make the first contact to get your foot in the door. Send Email Template 1 as soon as you get volunteer contact information.

Email Template 1 - Recruiting Volunteers

Hi, _____,

My name is _____, and I am a _____ at _____ in [city, state] _____. We are organizing a Career Expo to expose our students to potential career, college, military, and career-tech options available to them after high school.

We think that our students would benefit from hearing about your organization's work in the _____ career cluster as a _____. This is a great chance for you and other colleagues to share your knowledge with K-12 students who are eager to know more about your profession!

If you are interested in receiving more information and would consider participating in our Career Expo, please feel free to email me back at _____.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

After you have received confirmation of attendance from your volunteer, send Email Template 2 to provide them with your event logistical information. Also, include the attached **Volunteer Guide**. This guide covers content and expectations for the volunteers attending your expo.

Email Template 2 - Confirming Expo Logistics

Hi, _____!

Thank you again for participating in our upcoming Career Expo! We are so excited that you are interested in showing our students the ins and outs of the career opportunities within your organization.

Below is the date, time, and location we have scheduled the Career Expo:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: [include address, city, state, name of room (if available)] _____

In this email, we have included a Volunteer Guide that covers more details about what to expect from the expo.

Let us know if you have questions and thank you again for volunteering your time! We will send more logistical information soon.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Event Outreach

To increase attendance at your expo and to drive student interest, use promotional materials to advertise your upcoming Career Expo. Canva is an excellent tool that educators can use for free to create posters and handouts. View the attached **Sample Poster** handout as an example.

180 minutes

Day(s) Before Event

What to Do with Students?

Your Career Expo provides an opportunity for students to explore their future college and career options. Helping students prepare for the event so that they are knowledgeable and confident in talking to your volunteers can be very beneficial. In the days leading up to the event, consider working with your students through the Top of the Stack or Interview IQ lessons. After engaging in these lessons, students should have a resume to show your volunteers as well as interview skills that will help them communicate and express themselves.

Facilitator's Note: Facilitating Pre-Work Lessons

At your own discretion, you or a classroom teacher may facilitate these lessons. We suggest choosing a teacher who may have prior knowledge of resume and interviewing skills.

How to Set Up the Event?

To prepare you for your upcoming Career Expo, engage in the following card sort activity to practice and visualize setting up your event. Each card represents one of the 16 career clusters. You will use a top-down view of a sample basketball gym floor to strategically place the cards around the gym, to simulate the layout of your Career Expo.

Print off the attached **Career Expo Gym Set-Up** handout and the attached **Career Cluster Cards**. Cut the Cluster Cards into their individual pieces. You will have two clusters each, totaling 32 cards. You can print off more handouts as needed. Once you have cut out your cards, lay them out across the Career Expo Gym Set-Up handout and strategically plan out your expo. If you are not hosting an expo on your basketball gym floor, you can use a marker or pen to draw the shape of the space you plan to host it in. Be sure to think about where you want your students to enter and exit the expo. If your school has participated in past K20 Career Expo events, think about where you would put the career cluster banners and stands.

If you are hosting your expo on a basketball court, be sure to communicate this with the necessary stakeholders to take appropriate actions to protect the gym floor (e.g., lay out a floor tarp and waterproof floor mats).

After you have the layout of your expo mapped out, consider assigning booths strategically—colleges, career clusters, military, etc., grouped together. Design and print off the attached **Volunteer Table Tents** for each of your volunteers and make sure you have an accurate head count for chairs.

What Information Do Your Volunteers Need?

Send Email Template 3 to your volunteers during this step (a week before your event is a good rule of thumb). Edit the email template based on your information and needs. Be sure to share your contact information with your volunteers to avoid any miscommunication or issues on the day of the event.

Email Template 3 - Event Details and Needed Info

Hi, _____,

We hope this email finds you well. We are excited for you to join us at our Career Expo on _____.

The schedule for the day will be as follows and LUNCH will be provided!

- Sophomores (11:00-11:30)
- Freshmen (11:30-12:00)
- Juniors (12:00-12:30)
- Seniors (12:30-1:00)

Please plan to arrive thirty minutes early for sign-in and booth set-up. Parking will be available on the _____ side of the school building for all of our participants. Enter through the main doors and check in through the office. From there, someone will escort you to the expo.

Please feel free to bring any handouts, tools, examples, etc., for your booth, along with a tablecloth and banner, if you'd like.

Thank you again and let us know if you need anything.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

300 minutes

Day of Event

Finish last-minute preparations for the event—i.e., have enough tables, chairs, and help. If needed, consider recruiting students to help set up the event. Consider using stanchions to help with the flow of traffic; also use directional signs. If you haven't already, pull out and display K20 career cluster banners throughout the event space.

To ensure students are intentionally engaging with the volunteers, distribute the attached **During Expo BINGO!** handout. You may modify this handout as needed. This will allow students to ask volunteers different questions based on the squares they are missing. Consider providing your volunteers a set of stickers or stamps to mark the students' cards.

Facilitator's Note: Distributing Handouts

If you are planning to dismiss students in a certain class, you can have the teacher distribute the BINGO! handout before the students leave the room. You can also have a stack of handouts at the entrance to the expo.

If you are providing lunches for volunteers, make sure it's on the agenda you send to your volunteers but also remind them at the event. Consider having a designated area for food pickup, or a student worker helping distribute them.

Cleanup

Make sure that all tables and chairs make it back to their designated spaces. Pick up any trash, including volunteer table tents left behind, lunches, etc.

30 minutes

Wrap-Up

Student Wrap-Up

To help students remember what they learned from your expo event, have them complete a reflection activity found on the back of the During Expo BINGO! handout. After completing the final "3-2-1 Reflection" activity, have students turn in their handout for proof of attendance.

Event Wrap-Up

Using Email Template 4, be sure to follow up with the volunteers and thank them for their time. This will also give you the chance to ask any follow-up questions, collect any newly gained contacts, and see if there are any next steps for future events.

Email Template 4 - Thank You

Hi, _____,

Thank you for participating in our Career Expo on _____! We know your time is valuable and we are grateful that you spent some of it with us. The event was incredibly impactful for our students in preparing for their future.

If you are interested in continuing to work with our students, we'd love to chat about hosting you for a Career Cafe or bringing students to you for a College2Career Forum!

Thank you again!

Sincerely,

[Your name]

Research Rationale

Secondary school is essential in developing a student's life, interests, future career, and educational trajectory. Students often use their personalities and interests to help form career decision-making skills throughout their lives, but it becomes more prominent in secondary education as they approach adulthood. Personality traits "influence career adaptation by facilitating, or deterring, behavioral performances" (Lent & Brown, 2013, p. 563). Holland's theory of vocational choice notes that "the individual career satisfaction is based on the fit or congruence between the career personality and the environment of the work" (Zainudin et al., 2020, p. 884).

By connecting personality traits and interests, students begin to build self-efficacy in career decision-making as they become more confident in engaging in career exploration (Lent et al., 2016). This connection increases an individual's environmental fit and "level of congruence" within an organization (Zainudin et al., 2020, p. 884). One study of 4,834 secondary-aged students aimed to gauge the helpfulness of career talks in their schools (Kashefpakdel & Percy, 2017). The study showed that 2,660 (55%) of students rated participation in career talks quite helpful, while 1,196 (24.7%) rated the talk very helpful (Kashefpakdel & Percy, 2017).

This study shows that nearly three out of four students that participated in a career talk gained beneficial career knowledge from their guest speaker. Similarly, Covacevich et al. (2021) support this idea by stating that students who are engaged in guidance activities they felt were useful to them seemed likely to consciously gain value. Therefore, career interventions such as guest speakers play a significant role in shaping the career decision-making process of individuals. Career experts and professionals bring real-world experiences, insights, and knowledge to students during the critical career decision-making period.

Resources

- Covacevich, C., Mann, A., Santos, C., & Champaud, J. (2021, October 27). Indicators of teenage career readiness: An analysis of longitudinal data from eight countries. *OECD Education Working Papers, No. 258*, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/cec854f8-en
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- K20 Center. (n.d.). Top of the stack. Lesson. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/2879
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