College2Career Forum: OKC Zoo

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Essential Question(s)

- What steps do I need to take to reach my future goals?
- How can I apply this career information to my current postsecondary plans and academic opportunities?

Summary

This College2Career Forum at the Oklahoma City Zoo is designed to give students first-hand knowledge about what it could look like to work at a zoo or animal care facility. Students meet with zoo professionals in a variety of career fields who support the day-to-day operations of a zoo. Students learn how different college degrees connect to careers in a zoo setting, hear from a veterinarian from the zoo's animal hospital, and explore the zoo grounds. This activity acts as a career exploration pathway during which students can get an idea of what it is like to study and graduate from one of many programs at a postsecondary institution, from animal science to biology to business. Event specifics may change depending on location and timing.

Learning Goals

Attachments

- Road Map to Success—College2Career Forum - Spanish.docx
- Road Map to Success—College2Career Forum - Spanish.pdf
- Road Map to Success—College2Career Forum.docx
- Road Map to Success—College2Career Forum.pdf
- Visualize Your Career—College2Career Forum - Spanish.docx
- Visualize Your Career—College2Career Forum - Spanish.pdf
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- Visualize Your Career—College2Career Forum.pdf

Materials

- Road Map to Success handout (attached; one per student)
- Visualize Your Career handout (attached; one per student)
- Pens or pencils
- Electronic devices (optional)
- Name badges (optional)
- T-shirts (optional)

Preparation

Prior to facilitating any forum event, read the College2Career Forum: How to Guide for additional information on how to set up a forum.

Prior to facilitating this event, connect with the featured career professional to see if they are available to pitch either their postsecondary institution or career path to students during the scheduled lunch break.

5 minutes

Engage

Facilitator's Note: Disclaimer

This outline provided by this resource reflects the common structure of the OKC Zoo forum event. However, your event may be subject to change based on availability or the professionals leading your event. For example, professional slide shows may change or the offered activities may differ.

Arrive on site and confirm that your mode of transportation has the appropriate parking pass or availability as needed. Walk with your students to the site to meet your career professionals.

Provide students with a brief welcome and overview of the day. Consider including things like restroom locations, places to store bags, and electronic device policies.

Have students demonstrate what they know about the featured career(s), institution, or degree field(s) using the Fist to Five instructional strategy. Invite students to hold up a number between 0–5 to demonstrate one of the following levels of knowledge:

- A fist (0 fingers) if they know nothing at all
- 1 finger if they have a little understanding
- 2 fingers if they know something but need clarification
- 3 fingers if they have basic knowledge
- 4 fingers if they have an advanced understanding
- 5 fingers if they are an expert and can teach others

Invite students with prior knowledge, typically those that rated themselves 3–5, to share their knowledge with the whole group. Invite students who rated themselves 0–2 to share things they want to learn. Repeat the share out processes as needed.

Once students have shared their experiences, introduce the featured career professionals.

85 minutes

Explore

What to Expect

During the presentation, students should meet with members of the Oklahoma City Zoo educational team to learn about the many careers that work within the zoo. After students hear about different professions within the zoo, the professionals should introduce some of the zoo's animals and engage students in a career card sort activity.

Students will then have the opportunity to explore the Oklahoma City Zoo, meet professionals around the zoo, and participate in any available Animal Caretaker Talks or Vet Talks.

15 minutes

Explain

Engage students in the Think-Pair-Share instructional strategy by having them find a partner who participated in a different aspect of the activity than they did. Have partners share with each other what they learned from the activity. Encourage students to also ask questions about the featured degree program or career.

Facilitator's Note: Student Engagement

As the chaperone, your main role in this section is classroom management and encouraging students' question and participation.

10 minutes

Extend

Facilitator's Note: Lunch

This phase of the activity typically occurs around students' lunch break. Prior to lunch, connect with career professionals at the site to arrange a presentation during lunch. Consider asking them to present about the postsecondary institution they attended or how to pursue similar careers.

Have students eat lunch according to your preparations. While students eat, have professionals share a recruiting pitch about how students can attend the postsecondary institution they attended by inviting them to share information about the cost of tuition, housing, available scholarships, and more. Alternatively, professionals can also share about how to pursue their chosen career path with information about on-the-job training or internships. Provide time for students to ask any clarifying questions.

If time and resources permit, pass out one copy of the attached **Road Map to Success** handout to each student. Have students visit My Next Move or the K20 Center's career clusters resources at k20.ou.edu/careers to help them complete the handout. Explain that students should complete the handout based on their individual searches. If students need help, encourage them to research careers similar to those of the presenting professionals or those within the same career cluster.

Facilitator's Note: Road Map to Success Activity

If time does not permit or students don't have electronic devices available, consider completing the Road Map to Success when you return to campus.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Once you and your students return to campus after the College2Career Forum event, engage students in a reflection on their experiences using the Mirror, Microscope, Binoculars instructional strategy. Give each student one copy of the attached **Visualize Your Career** handout and encourage them to reflect on their experiences using the following prompts:

- **Binoculars (big picture):** Can I see myself in this career field later in life? How does this field play a role in the bigger world?
- **Microscope (close inspection):** What are some smaller details of the career(s) I experienced today that I hadn't thought about before? How do my skills fit with this position(s)?
- **Mirror (self-reflection):** How do I feel about the career(s) I experienced today? Has this experience helped me think about what I want to do after high school?

Research Rationale

As research continues, it is becoming increasingly evident that simply telling students about postsecondary institution (PSI) opportunities or career fields isn't enough. Teachers need to give students impactful, relatable, and engaging experiences so that they can actively explore future options. Not only do these experiences help students explore future opportunities, they can also lead to career success later in life. Research shows a strong correlation between career success later in life and job shadowing and workplace visits as a teen. One study found that Canadian students who made a workplace visit by age 15 were 4% less likely to be NEET (Not being in Education, Employment, or Training) than their peers at age 25 (Covacevich et al., 2021). The same study found that Korean students who made the same type of workplace visits were 1.23 times more likely not to be NEET than those who did not make a visit.

Work-Based Learning

In making college and career decisions, Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities can provide secondary students with experience, clarity, and increased self-efficacy. Field-based learning is a powerful tool in helping students to better understand the core concepts and to increase their enthusiasm (Janovy & Major, 2009; Manzanal et al., 1999, as cited in Pereira & Gheisari, 2017). These experiences also enable students to interact with professionals and perceive fieldwork in a way that is unattainable in a traditional school setting. A research project by Pereira and Gheisari (2017) studied faculty perceptions of the effectiveness of construction site visits during construction courses. The researchers found that faculty members believed observing the construction environment was critical for the students (Pereira & Gheisari, 2017). With student benefits and faculty acknowledgment, work-based learning (WBL) can provide a compelling experience for students.

Another WBL study of eleven low-income ethnic-minority secondary students aimed to gauge the impact of a school's WBL program. Through data analysis of student interviews, the study revealed that the WBL program promoted hope for students' future academic and career success and offered support and mentorship through workplace supervisors within the program (Medvide & Kenny, 2020). This hope, support, and mentorship give students—especially low-income students whose backgrounds and lived experiences may hinder them—the self-efficacy to reach their full potential.

Hands-On Educational Experiences

Several research projects prove that hands-on educational experiences can positively impact students' academic and work-related outcomes. One such study followed a group of Australian secondary school students through a year-long science program. This program aimed to strengthen students' science skills in data analysis, experimentation, and scientific writing through current, hands-on research within the context of a significant worldwide health issue (Puslednik & Brennan, 2020). The research team found that the success of the intervention was reflected in students' mean score of knowledge growth, which rose considerably according to a self-assessment survey. They also found, through VALID 10 testing, that 84% of intervention students would have scored lower on their tested science knowledge, problem-solving, communication, and planning skills than the control group (Puslednik & Brennan, 2020).

Another similar study evaluated the effectiveness of a hands-on learning experience in cancer research for 20 secondary students. After a two-week science summer camp at the University of the Pacific, the researcher found that 83.33% of students were interested in participating in another hands-on learning experience. The same number of students reported increased interest in attending the University of the Pacific as their postsecondary institution (PSI) (Argueta et al., 2020). These results demonstrated the impact and importance of hands-on learning for high school-aged students when considering their future academic and career endeavors.

Resources

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