

Guideposts for Success: Lesson Plans and Activities

Developed by the Institute for Educational Leadership

LESSON 14: GETTING UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH STEM

AT-A-GLANCE

Some students might not think about STEM careers for many reasons: (1) they may not have been exposed to them; (2) they might not necessarily think they are “cool” or attainable; and (3) they simply have no idea about what they are...except for the fact that they involve science, technology, engineering, and math (though exciting for many, not terribly exciting for all). Plus, many students just don’t think they are “smart” enough for a job in a STEM field.

You have an opportunity to expose students to possibilities they may never have considered before! The best way to do this is not by reading about these jobs or by discussing what these jobs do, it is to visit where these jobs happen. Reading and discussion couldn’t hurt, though.

Prior to this lesson, go through your personal networks and connections to find people you know...who know someone who know someone...in STEM occupations. If you don’t have any luck (or just want to make some new connections anyway), call your local One Stop Career Center’s Business Services Specialist (www.servicelocator.org) or Local Workforce Investment Board (check out the Web site of your local government for a contact person). Let them know who you are and what you do—and that you would like to expose young people to STEM occupations. See who THEY know and who they can connect you to. Then, it’s up to you (or you along with your students) to schedule a visit. Don’t forget to ask your students what their parents do. There may be connections right under your nose. 😊

Lesson (will need computer/Internet access)

Before making a visit to any employer, it is a good idea to expose students to the employer ahead of time, via the company’s website. Either in pairs or individually, review the site and see if you can determine the company’s product or service; what types of careers they offer; do they have any focus on corporate citizenship? Start developing questions students want to know about the business. There are several websites and NCWD/Youth publications that offer sample informational interview questions (for guidance and examples), but it is quite powerful for students to develop these questions on their own.

Prepare for the visit by discussing appropriate interview attire. Though this not a personal job interview, it’s important to represent yourselves professionally, which will also show respect to the company you will be visiting. Have students come to class one day representing how they SHOULD NOT dress for a workplace; and then have them come the next day dressed in clothes attire they *should* wear. Take before and after pictures (but be sure to have permission, first, if necessary)— and have students prepare a poster illustrating “What Not To Wear.”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics STEM jobs report from the 2007 Occupational Outlook Quarterly is a helpful resource to continue discussions about STEM occupations and STEM preparation (<http://www.bls.gov/opub/ooq/2007/spring/art04.pdf>).

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Extension

Work with students to have them complete another exercise similar to this one...but independently.