

# Guideposts for Success: Lesson Plans and Activities

## Developed by the Institute for Educational Leadership

### LESSON 8: GETTING TO THE NITTY GRITTY WITH STEM - INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

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#### AT-A-GLANCE

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Informational interviews are a great way to find out more about careers you may have an interest in pursuing. Informational interviews involve talking with people who are actually working in the field in order to gain additional knowledge about the occupation or industry. This is a great way to find out about the occupation in ways that you can't get from computer research. For an informational interview, you will need to be prepared to talk a little about yourself as a means of introduction (who you are and why you are asking this information). Informational interviews ideally occur at the place of employment—but can be conducted over the telephone or via email.

#### ICEBREAKER

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**Tell Us About Yourself** - Pass around a bag of M&Ms and small paper plates or napkins. Tell students to take as many as they want—but not to eat any just yet. Once all the participants have their candy, tell them that for each [specific color, i.e., yellow, orange, brown, etc.] M&M they chose, they need to tell the group something about themselves (such as a positive personality trait). For instance, if a student took 10 M&M's and 3 of them were the color you mentioned (i.e., yellow), they would need to say 3 things about themselves. Once a student's turn is completed, he/she can eat their M&M's.

Note: If you would rather not use M&M's for this activity, you can substitute most anything else, for example:

- A roll of toilet paper: ask students to take as many individual sheets or squares as they think they might need (do not tell them the purpose of the sheets). Students would need to tell one thing about themselves for each square they took.
- Wrapped candy: ask students to take as many as they want. They would need to tell one positive personality trait for each piece of candy.
- Paper clips, post-it notes, or just about anything else you can think of can be used.

#### ICEBREAKER DISCUSSION

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Is it getting easier to talk about yourself in a group setting? If yes, what are some of the reasons? If no, what are some steps you can take to start to feel a bit more comfortable talking about yourself?

#### LESSON/ACTIVITY (will need computer/Internet access & access to a telephone)

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*Use the information gathered from Lesson 7 of School-Based Preparatory Experiences (STEM: It's More than a Twig or Branch) to begin this lesson.*

Have students identify the STEM occupation(s) each would like to know more about. (It will be helpful to note the job title as well as related titles for researching).

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Log onto [wwwSimplyHired.com](http://wwwSimplyHired.com) or [wwwIndeed.com](http://wwwIndeed.com). Both of these websites “spider” (or pull information from other sites) to collect information about specific jobs in a chosen community.

1. Enter the job title and either a zip code or a city, state.
2. Review the posted positions—and make a list of 3-5 companies that hire for this particular occupation.
3. Next you will need to find each company’s website and make a note of it. *You can do this by exploring the posting from the original site, or you may use the search engine of your choice (i.e., Google) to locate the Web site address of each Company.*
4. On each Web site, you should be able to find two links: “Careers” or “Employment” and “Contact Us.”
5. Click on the Careers link to see what types of careers are offered by this company. This lets you know the different types of positions available in a STEM environment.
6. Click on the find a “Contact Us” link. This will either be a phone number, an email address or both. Write this information down.

Now comes the exciting part! You will work with a partner to plan your informational (telephone) interview. It may be helpful to write down a script so you don’t get nervous when calling. Think about something like this:

“Hello, my name is [First and Last] and I am a student at [your school]. I am researching careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and after exploring your Web site found that you have positions in \_\_\_\_\_, an occupation that is of great interest to me. I am trying to find out more about different careers from people who actually perform the work—and would appreciate the opportunity to ask someone 5 questions about this industry. I would need no more than 10 minutes of someone’s time. Will you please help me?”

*\*if you have difficulty getting someone to speak with you on the telephone, ask if you could have an email address of someone in this occupation so you might send the questions electronically. **Remember to thank the person to whom you spoke.***

Once you gain access to an individual, use the questions developed in Lesson 7 for your interview. Take notes during the interview so you will remember what the person said.

Be sure to get the correct spelling of the person name you interviewed and an email address or a workplace address so you can send a thank you.

#### REFLECTION

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What was the most difficult part of the telephone informational interview? What was the easiest part? After receiving this information, what are your thoughts about this industry? Is this a career you might wish to consider? Is your view of STEM occupations the same as it was when you started these lessons?

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#### **EXTENSION**

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Invite local STEM professionals in to discuss their careers. As part of information interviewing conversations, students can ask their informational interview contacts if they might be willing to visit the school and speak with their class about STEM occupations.