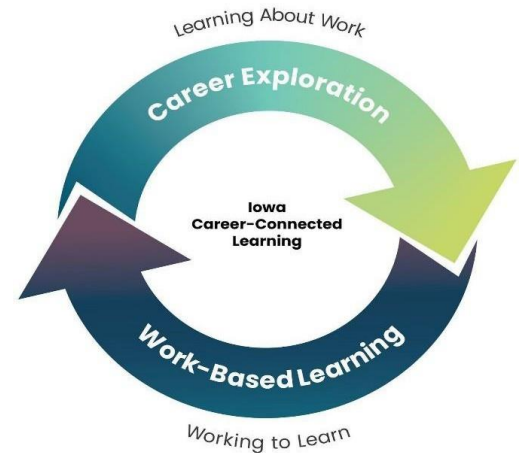


Informational Interview Toolkit

Informational Interview definition:

An informational interview is a **career exploration** experience that allows student learners to inquire about aspects of a career path in a direct conversation with an industry professional through a phone call or in-person meeting. Students should prepare for informational interviews with a list of questions to ask the industry partner. Students should also ask additional questions as pertinent topics arise during the interview. The information gathered in an informational interview can assist students with learning more about the career path of interest that they may not be able to find on career information websites or due to limited local industry representation.



Preparation for Informational Interviews

Review school policies for guidelines for the informational interview

Examples include:

- ☐ policies about when students leave the building
- ☐ protocols for communicating electronically with an industry professional

Identify industry professionals who are a good match for the experience

- As an educator or instructor, you know your student learners and their needs. Consider identifying a professional who:
 - ☐ works in a career of interest or in a related career field of interest of the student
 - ☐ lives in your community or near your community (if possible)

Prepare students by providing academic preparation prior to the experience

- Provide age-appropriate career learning
 - Examples include:
 - ☐ reading a book about the career (ideal for elementary students)
 - ☐ watching a short video clip on the career
 - ☐ assigning a career and/or organization research assignment
 - ☐ sharing the speaker's biography with the student
- Support students to prepare questions to enrich the experience through additional research.
 - Examples include:
 - ☐ providing a career research classroom activity or assignment
 - ☐ providing an organizational research activity or assignment
- Support student professionalism with communication.
 - Examples include:
 - ☐ providing a communication example
 - ☐ providing classroom support for the student to prepare a communication
 - ☐ communicating expectations on how the communication will take place between the student and professional while following district policies

Prepare the industry professional for a positive experience

- Plan the logistics
 - If the professional will be visiting the classroom in-person:
 - » Share parking information
 - » Share information on the process to enter the building
 - ◇ If applicable, identify a staff member who will meet the professional in the front office
 - » Confirm the day and time for the informational interview
 - » Relay expectations for the student's professional behavior and attire
 - If the professional is joining virtually:
 - » Create an online calendar invite with the day and time of the interview while following district policy protocol
 - » Make sure the video link used for the presentation is compatible for both parties
 - » Relay expectations for the student's professional behavior and attire
 - If the interview will be done through a phone call:
 - » Follow district policy protocol for identifying a school location for the phone call to take place
 - » Confirm the day and time for the informational interview
 - » Relay expectations for the student's professional behavior and attire
 - If the student is visiting the industry site:
 - » Ensure all district policies are followed for the student's absence and visit
 - » Confirm the day and time for the informational interview
 - » Coordinate/support/arrange transportation for the student
 - » Relay student expectations for parking, organizational entry, professional behavior and attire
- Outline clear expectations to support learning goals.
 - Communicate key career components you would like the professional to share
 - Communicate connections between the career of the professional to student learning in the classroom
 - » Share current concepts students are learning and ask that the professional connect how those are used in their work
 - » Share upcoming concepts that the professional could provide a preview or an example to help extend student learning
 - Outline clear expectations for the students:
 - » Professional behavior
 - » Professional attire
 - » Questions students are to ask and how they will submit their responses
- Provide questions to the professional and student prior to the interview.
 - Identify a list of questions that meet classroom needs.

Example questions:

 - » What is your title and what are your main responsibilities in your current position?
 - » Why did you decide to work in this industry?
 - » What does a typical day at your organization look like?
 - » Can you tell me what education and experiences led up to you obtaining your current position?
 - » What are the most vital steps someone should take to prepare for a role like yours?
 - » What accomplishments do you feel set you apart in this industry?
 - » What new skills have you developed since taking this role?
 - » What types of decisions do you make in your role?
 - » What is your organizational culture like?
 - » What is your favorite thing about your current career?
 - » What is your least favorite thing about your current career?

- » Is there something you wish you would have known when you were younger that would help you in your current career?
- » What types of projects do you get to work on?
- » What are some of the greatest rewards you have experienced since obtaining your role?
- » Are you able to establish a work/life balance in your field?
- » Are you able to share some of the most difficult challenges you face in your role?
- » If you weren't in this position, what other positions would you be interested in pursuing?
- » Is there anything else you would like to share about your career or organization?

During the Informational Interview

Provide a simple checklist for all parties to follow

- Relay academic expectations for the professional
 - ☐ Be available during the agreed time frame
 - ☐ Conduct the interview in a professional setting
 - ☐ Be prepared to answer the student's questions provided by the educator ahead of time
- Relay expectations for the student
 - ☐ Arrive early for the agreed informational interview time
 - ☐ Bring a copy of the informational interview questions and a writing utensil to take notes
 - ☐ Use professionalism in behavior, communication and attire during the informational interview
- Relay expectations for the educator/instructor
 - ☐ Make note of the days and times the informational interviews are occurring for your students
 - » Be accessible in the event something happens and communication is needed from you.
 - ☐ If the informational interviews will take place at the school, management of the professionals arriving and connecting with the student may require additional staff members for smooth coordination

After the Informational Interview

Make note of the experience and collect feedback

- Collect feedback from the professional, students and your own observations.
- Identify recommendations to improve future experiences.

Send a thank you note to the professional

- Encourage students to write a thank you note or email as well.
 - ☐ This communication connects the value of the professional's time and provides an opportunity for students to practice professional skills

Connect the professional's experience with student ICAP through a simple reflection

Note for college instructors: Although the acronym ICAP is used in K-12, the following examples provide valuable reflection activities applicable in supporting work-based learning for college students.

- Sample reflection activities:
 - ☐ Top Five
 - » Students identify the top five things learned during the informational interview
 - ☐ Survey
 - » Create a short survey and provide a QR code for students to complete their response
 - ☐ More examples are available on the [Department's Career and Academic Planning webpage](#)

- Consider small group extension activities to deepen connections of content to career. Examples include:
 - research activities to learn more about the career or organization
 - a presentation on a project related to the career path
 - an authentic project for the professional's organization
- If you have pictures from the informational interview, share the pictures with the professional and your district.
 - Make sure you have photo releases prior to sharing
 - Publicize the presentation to demonstrate the value of the experience and the partnership with local industry.
- Provide an extension to the experience for your classroom.
 - Ask the professional to be a part of a classroom project or presentation.
 - Connect with the professional to develop an authentic project for students to see the content connection in solving a local organizational challenge.

Additional Preparation and Reflection Example Activities

Example Student Preparation Activities

Research Activity in Preparation for the Informational Interview (possible questions)

1. Professional's organization name and website
2. Organization's location
3. Organization's mission statement
4. What is the organization's primary product or service?
5. What departments exist within the organization?
6. Who are at least two competitors of the organization, career path and/or professional that you would like to ask?

Career Research Activity

1. Name of the career
2. Education/training required for this career path
3. Skills required for success in this career
4. Related careers that interest you
5. Typical earnings in this career path
6. Projected job openings in Iowa for this career

Example Student Reflection

Informational Interview Reflection Activity (possible questions)

1. Student name
2. Professional interviewed and their organization's name
3. What did you like about the career you completed your informational interview on?
4. Would you consider a career in the guest speaker's field? Why or why not?
5. What did you learn that interested you about this career? What did you learn that did not interest you?
6. What knowledge or skills would you need to strengthen in order to be successful in a career like the one you interviewed on? Please explain.
7. Identify your next steps based on the informational interview experience. What courses are you interested in taking part in? Are there related careers you would be interested in learning more about?