

Primary Futures

A step-by-step guide to help teachers run activities that challenge the career gender stereotypes of primary school students using volunteers from the world of work.

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INTRODUCTION

About the Guide

This is one of a series of easy-to-follow guides to help teachers prepare and run Inspiring the Future (ITF) activities at their school. They include suggestions for designing and running an activity, tips for inviting volunteers and encouraging them to accept requests and in some instances, sample activity tools and templates are provided for teachers to use or modify as needed.

About the Inspiring the Future Campaign

Inspiring the Future (ITF) Australia is a national campaign to give every school student the opportunity to be inspired and motivated by volunteers from a wide range of occupations and industries at all levels. Workplace volunteers sign up on the ITF online platform where they create a personal profile including school regions they are willing to travel to on invitation. Teachers sign up online for free to search for and invite registered volunteers into their school to share their career story or help in other ways. ITF challenges gender stereotyping, broadens students' career horizons and helps to illustrate the relevance of their classroom studies to workplace applications. The more connections that school students have with people from the workplace, the better equipped they are to make informed decisions about their future study and career options and to gain meaningful employment. ITF expands the number of those connections, especially for students with limited role models, living in families experiencing intergenerational unemployment and other types of entrenched social disadvantage.

Who are we

The Inspiring the Future Australia campaign is run by School Industry Partnership (SIP), an Australian not-for-profit organisation whose ultimate aim is to inspire young people to reach their full potential. The UK based Education & Employers charity licenses SIP to roll out ITF across Australia. SIP currently works with local delivery partners, NASSSA in Adelaide and AusSIP in Western Sydney. We're always looking for additional champions, recruiters, organisers, or other individuals who can help roll out ITF in their local region or help out behind the scenes! If you or your organisation has an interest in supporting or enhancing ITF we'd really love to hear from you.



Child Protection Requirements

Student safety is paramount, so we ask that all volunteers agree to comply with any Child Protection requirements in their State or as asked by the school. This most commonly entails showing photo ID, filling out a simple form or getting a free volunteer working with children check. You can learn more about the requirements in your state at our FAQ page. ITF volunteers must be supervised by a teacher at all times while on your school premises.



Get involved as a teacher

Sign up as a teacher on the secure online platform www.inspiringthefuture.org.au to connect with volunteers from a range of sectors, professions and experience who have indicated their willingness to visit schools in your region. Volunteers have signed up to share their knowledge, experience and enthusiasm about their jobs and experiences with your students.

You can invite them via the ITF platform come to your school to broaden your students' awareness of career options, engage their interest in the practical applications of their classroom learning and to generally enable them to make informed study and career decisions.

Although volunteers have indicated their willingness to take part in specific ITF activities, you are free to request their assistance with any other activity relevant to your students' learning needs. When you are inviting volunteers to take part in an activity at your school, it's advisable to provide them with at least three weeks' notice and to invite at least double the number of people you need. Volunteers often have busy schedules and may not always be available when you need them.

Context and Purpose

Career Education in Primary Schools

Only in recent years have the career aspirations which children begin to form in their primary and early years, received any serious consideration from policymakers. This is despite studies over recent decades which have all come to the same, resounding conclusion; the perceptions children have about certain jobs and careers are formed and sometimes cemented at a young age.

These studies have emphasised that children's aspirations are often shaped, moulded and restricted by gender stereotyping, socio-economic background and importantly, who they know. These factors can, and do, go on to influence the academic effort children exert in certain lessons, the subjects they choose to study and the jobs they end up pursuing.

'What's My Line?' Activity

Most commonly, Primary Futures involves a fun 'What's My Line' activity. Volunteers sit on stage in casual clothing with a large number in front of them and answer 'yes' and 'no' questions from primary school students about their job. After the volunteers leave the platform, the students guess what each person's job is.

Then comes the great reveal, as volunteers return wearing their uniform or holding a prop related to their job. Each volunteer says who they, what they do and explains the importance of literacy and numeracy in their job and helping them get there. They then interact with the children in small groups, sharing more about their job and answering their questions.

Tip: Ask your volunteers to think about how they use English or Maths in their job when you confirm they are attending, so they're prepared to say a little about it at the end of the activity.

"Drawing the Future" Research

An international landmark survey called "Drawing the Future" was undertaken in 2017 by the UK charity Education and Employers (The organisation that runs Inspiring the Future UK) in partnership with the OECD Education and Skills, Times Education Supplement, the NAHT and the UCL Institute of Education. Over 20,000 entries from children aged 7-11 were received from the UK and other countries including Australia. The findings of the report demonstrated three large implications; that our children's career aspirations are only marginally shifting from age 7 to age 17, that career perceptions are influenced by gender stereotyping and that the career aspirations of children today do not match with the workforce needs they will need to fill in the future.

Nick Chambers, CEO, Education and Employers said "Drawing the Future" demonstrates the need for primary school age children to have more exposure to role models from the world of work from an early age. This is vital to ensure that children better understand the world they are growing up in, are aware of the vast range of career options open to them and are not ruling things out at an early age,"

The lack of access to role models and awareness of the different jobs is a particular concern for children from disadvantaged backgrounds



Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills at the OECD said "All children, regardless of their social background, where they live or the jobs their parents do, should have the same chance to meet people doing a wide range of jobs to help them understand the vast opportunities open to them. It is something governments and policy makers around the world should give much more consideration,"

Primary Futures Australia connects primary schools with inspirational volunteers from a range of industries and careers, who come into school to talk to children about their jobs and show how what they are learning at school (such as maths and reading) can lead to an interesting, exciting future.

Easy Steps for a 'What's My Line?' Activity

Space

- School Hall with a stage
- A room/space nearby for volunteers to hide their job props and hide their uniforms (Make sure children don't see what they bring before they are stored)

Participants

- 40-100 primary school students
- Activity Facilitator (Preferably a teacher)
- 4-6 volunteers (Could be accessed and invited via the ITF Australia Website) See sample invitation letter (Appendix A and C)

Equipment

- 4-6 chairs
- 4-6 large self-standing cardboard squares with a large number (1-6) on each
- Large moveable white board or wall chart to record student job guesses for all to see
- Laminated double-sided cards (approx. 15 X 10 cm) with lists of possible questions for the children to ask volunteers. (see Appendix D)

Space set-up

- Children sit in small groups/teams of 8-10 (either on the floor or on chairs)
- 4-6 chairs placed in a row on front of the stage



Pre-Activity Briefing *(Approx. 15 Minutes)*

- Greet volunteers at front desk, help them to store their props and uniforms, and have a staff member brief them on their role
- Concurrent with the above, the teacher/facilitator explains the activity procedure to the children and encourages them to think of possible questions to ask volunteers such as “do you use maths at work?” “Do you wear a uniform?” They are not to directly ask questions such as “are you a doctor?”

Tip: Ask your volunteers to think about how they use English or Maths in their job when you confirm they are attending, so they're prepared to say a little about it at the end of the activity.

Activity Procedure *(Approx. 60 Minutes)*

- Volunteers come up and take their place on chairs and display a large number in front of them for students to see. They are introduced to the students by name only. (2 mins)
- The teacher/facilitator invites the students to ask the volunteers questions one at a time to which each volunteer responds with “yes” “no” or “sometimes” “sort of” etc. Each question is directed at all of the volunteers to answer. (15 mins)
- Volunteers leave stage and go to the prop room/space while student groups/teams discuss and agree on each volunteer’s job. A teacher records each group’s answers on the board for all to see (10 mins) (see sample recording chart)
- Volunteers return to the stage one by one with their props/uniform etc and are told what the students guessed they were. The volunteers then introduce themselves and explain what job they do. (5-6 mins). There is an example following of how this might work.



Possible Script

Volunteer number 1 is reintroduced onto the stage:

Facilitator: ‘Number 1, we guessed you were teacher, a vet or a childminder. After the children have shouted in unison “what’s your line?” can you please reveal your job, 1, 2, 3!

Children shout in unison: ‘What’s your line?’

Volunteer: I am a Graphic Designer. I work as a freelance Graphic Designer which means I work for lots of different clients instead of just for one person or company. I studied Graphic Design at University and then I did lots of work experience after to learn more about the job and advance my skills. In my job I design web pages and leaflets like this one (shows a prop). I use all sorts of skills in my day to day including Art, IT, Maths and English. I use reading a lot in my job as I have lots of emails to read and briefs from my clients. I also use text within design which makes reading and understanding the words very important.

Facilitator: Thankyou number 1. Give a round of applause. Now let’s welcome Number 2.

- After all volunteers have introduced themselves, the children are directed to merge into 4-6 larger groups (depending on how many volunteers take part) and much like Career Speed Networking, each volunteer sits with a group of students and talks to them about what they do in their job. Each volunteer rotates around the groups at 5-7 minute intervals showing their props and answering students’ questions. This is an opportunity for the students to ask more specific questions about the volunteers’ revealed career, as well as find out how they use Maths and English in their job. A bell could be used to indicate time for volunteers to move to the next group. (30-35mins)

Conclusion

- Teacher and students thank the volunteers for coming to the school to share their stories
- Present each volunteer with a small gift of appreciation
- A teacher escorts volunteers to the front office to sign out and leave

Activity follow-up

Let us know how it went – send us any pictures, videos and feedback to online@inspiringthefuture.org.au so we can help to showcase and celebrate your success. You can also tag us on Twitter @ITF_Australia and Facebook @InspiringtheFutureAU.

Primary Futures Resources

Appendix A: Sample volunteer invitation

(Once you have searched for and identified suitable people to invite).

Dear _____

We are inviting you to take part in an enjoyable careers awareness activity at our primary school on (Date)_____ from (Times) __ to _____. You will one of (Number) ____ volunteer participants representing different occupations in the "What's My Line" activity during which the children will try and guess what you all do by asking a series of closed questions. The activity will inspire the children to consider careers they have never thought of before. If you could be at the school at (Time____) for a briefing session, that would be great. Please bring along some kind of prop or uniform representing your industry to display to the children later when you finally identify your profession. (You can hide your props/uniform in a store room during question time). The children will be asking you all questions such as "do you work with animals" ,"do you work outdoors", "do you work night shifts" and you can only answer "yes" or "no" or "sometimes" etc. They are not allowed to ask "Are you a"

We have large numbers on boards and you will have one of these in front of you so the students can identify you for questioning and final guessing of your profession. When you finally reveal your occupation, please be ready to let the children know how important primary school literacy and numeracy were in helping you achieve your career goal and in your current job.

We hope you are available to assist in this way and please let me know if you would like further information.

Kind regards

Appendix B: Sample follow-up message

(Once a volunteer has accepted your invitation)

Hi_____

Many thanks for accepting our invitation to take part in our “What’s my Line” activity on (Date)_____and we look forward to participation. Parking is available in the staff car-park area and you can follow the signs to the front office. Don’t forget to be discrete in bringing your uniform and/or props into the school so that children won’t see them. You will need to bring along your photo ID (and /or other required documentation) to present at the front office when you arrive at (Time)___ and someone will meet you there to escort you to the briefing session.

Don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions such as suggestions for props. My number is (Mob)_____

Kind regards

Appendix C: Sample invitation to an organisation

(To source a volunteer outside of ITF portal)

Subject: Male Nurse Required

Dear Human Resources Manager (or relevant salutation)

Our primary school is conducting an enjoyable careers awareness activity on (Date)_____ from (Times) ___ to _____ and we would love to have a male nurse from your hospital take part to represent your industry. He would be one of five people representing different professions. The activity is called “What's My Line” during which the children will try and guess what each person does by asking a series of closed questions. Each volunteer will wear casual clothing that does not indicate what they do.

The children will ask questions such as “do you work with machines”, “does your job involve night shift work” etc and the volunteers can only answer with a yes or no. After questions are finished, children decide what jobs they think they do while the volunteers leave the stage and return wearing a uniform or carrying a prop related to their profession to reveal their profession. They then interact with the children as they talk about their job and mention how primary school literacy and numeracy was relevant in helping them achieve their career goals and is relevant in their current job role.

The activity will inspire the children to consider careers they have never thought of before and challenge gender stereotyping that begins in children’s early years of life.

Volunteers will need to bring along photo ID when reporting to the school office on the day (mention any other required documentation and how to obtain it)

I look forward to your assistance in locating a willing volunteer for this activity.

Kind regards

Appendix D: Student Questions

Students will most likely have some questions in mind themselves but teachers can help prepare them in advance with practice runs. The following questions could be provided to students either prior to the activity or on the day itself.

Sample Questions

- Do you wear a uniform?
- Does your job involve building things?
- Do you work with people?
- Is your job in an office?
- Do you use a computer?
- Does your job involve designing things?
- Do you travel for work?
- Do you work in a team?
- Did you go to Uni for your job?
- Do you use Maths in your job?
- Is your job outside?
- Does your job involve saving people?
- Do you help people?
- Do you drive a car?
- Do you use any languages in your job?
- Do you work with animals?
- Do you work at night sometimes?
- Do you work with food?
- Do you have to handle money at work?
- Do you help people solve their problems?
- Do you have to be a good listener?
- Do you ever work with children?
- Do you have to speak to people in public?
- Do you have to dress smartly in your job?
- Do you drive a truck?
- Do you have to travel abroad?
- Do you have to write at work?

This guide has been prepared by



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