

Informal Conversations

A step-by-step guide to help teachers run informal career conversations 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 we are

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 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.

Easy Steps for Informal Conversations

Purpose of Speed Career Networking

Not all volunteers feel comfortable standing up to give a speech before a group of students and they are more likely to accept an invitation from a teacher to participate in an informal career conversation.

Speed career conversations enable a group of students to have casual, interactive career conversations with a variety of workplace guest speakers at one event in order to broaden their understanding of career opportunities and pathways. It could involve speakers representing one industry sector but having varied job roles or it could be speakers representing a variety of industry sectors and job roles.

Informal career conversations are often more beneficial than formal guest speeches as they provide a relaxed environment for students to ask questions and explore different pathways and careers.

Run your own Speed Career Networking

(Example for 80 students)

Time: Two and a half hours (suggested)

Venue: A space large enough to have 10 tables of eight students & 1 volunteer guest speaker per table. (Adjust per number of students and volunteers participating).

Materials/Equipment needed

- 10 tables and 100 chairs (unless you use 10 circles of chairs)
- Numbered table stands (1-10)
- A small bell with a ring that can be heard across the room
- 80 Student question cards (See appendix A)

Secure volunteer guest speakers

- Use your own network or sign up as a teacher to use the ITF website to find and invite registered volunteers representing the industry sectors/occupations your students are interested in finding out more about. Service clubs and local government bodies could be a good source of volunteers if you choose not to rely solely on the ITF database or if you can't find who are looking for through the platform.

Speed Career Conversations

- Students are seated around 10 tables each having a different volunteer guest speaker sitting with them. The tables are labeled 1-10 (use restaurant table stands if you have them).
- The students are given double sided prompt cards with suggested questions they could ask each volunteer (See appendix A). They can find out about their industry, their job role and why they enjoy it, their personal career journey, current & future career opportunities in their industry and education pathway options.
- Each volunteer engages in conversation with the students for 10-15 minutes and then moves to the next numbered table when a bell is rung by the teacher.
- Let the speakers know that if the conversations begin to lag, to go around the table asking each student what career pathway/s they are interested in or what school subject/s they like. This may open further opportunities for the speaker to provide encouraging advice and feedback etc.

Reflection & Feedback

- Group reflection (Optional) (See Appendix: B)
- Students complete brief event feedback survey form (See Appendix: C)



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.

Resources for informal conversations

Appendix A: Student Question Cards

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.



Appendix A: Student Question Cards

- Have you done different kinds of jobs before or is this the only sector in which you have worked?
- Have you found hobbies or activities outside of school teach you any useful skills for work?
- Do you manage other people/are you managed by someone else? What do you think makes a good manager?
- Is there anything you would do differently in your education/career path to this point?
- What are the biggest challenges for you at work?
- How does your job affect the rest of your daily life?
- What do you enjoy most about your job?
- Do you have to work with other people or do you mainly work alone?
- What advice would you give if you had a daughter/son my age?
- What can I do now to prepare me for this kind of career?
- What do you do?
- What skills/qualities do you need to do your job?
- What does a typical day/week look like at work?
- Is the job what you expected when you entered this industry?
- Why did you choose this career?
- What was your education/training route into this career?
- What did you learn in school that you find useful at work?
- Do you use languages/maths/science in your job at all?
- What is the salary range for this kind of work? Are there any other benefits?

Appendix B: Group Reflective Conversation

Purpose:

To enable all participants (students & speakers) to share their different experiences of what has happened, to reflect on what they found helpful and to reinforce the benefit of the activity and consider possible implications for their future. Group conversations are a good way to prime the thinking of students prior to completing a written feedback form.

Time: Approximately 5 minutes

Suggested facilitator questions:

Tip: All questions must be open questions not closed questions. Ask at least one question at each of the four levels in their order to allow the maximum benefit of the conversation.

Tip: Encourage participants to call out intuitively the first ideas that come to mind. They are often the most helpful insights. Move quickly through the questions and have at least 2-3 people answer each one. Repeat them if necessary towards different parts of the room to encourage participation.

Objective level questions

What words or phrases do you recall from your conversations?

What were some of the more common questions asked to the speakers?

Reflective level questions

What made you laugh?

What surprised you?

Interpretive level questions

How was this activity helpful for you?

What new insight did you gain today?

Decisional level questions

What's the key insight you will take away from today's activity?

What future actions have you decided to take as a result of what you have learned?

Thank the participants for their input

Appendix C: Student Feedback

Event Date: _____

1. Are you? (Circle) Male Female Prefer not to say

2. What school do you go to? _____

3. What school year are you currently in? (Circle) Year 7 8 9 10 11 12 Left school

4. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most certain), how certain were you before today about what you want to do in the future?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. How certain are you now, as a result of today's session?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. Which speakers were the most helpful for you today in helping you think about your future? (Circle)

Automotive Hospitality Construction Printing & Graphics Metals & Engineering

Electrical Plumbing Hair & Beauty Business Services

School Based Apprenticeships/Traineeships

7. Please provide a response to each of these statements.

Today's event has motivated me to study harder

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Not sure

Today's event made me more confident about what I want to do in the future

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Not sure

Today's event has given me more information to decide my next steps after I leave school

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Not sure

As a result of talking/listening to the volunteers today I changed my mind about a particular job

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Not sure

As a result of talking/listening to the volunteers today I changed my mind about subjects I might study

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Not sure

8. How valuable overall did you find the event today? (10 being very valuable)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. Did the session today meet your overall expectations? Yes Sort of No Unsure

10. How could future sessions like this be improved to meet your expectations?

This guide has been prepared by



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