

## Making a Difference: Citizenship in Action<sup>1</sup>

*Time Estimate:* 30-45 minutes

### Overview

Students consider ways to make a difference and take action on behalf of people and causes they care about, both on and off the job. They learn about men, women, and kids who've taken stands throughout U.S. history. This activity comes complete with pre-made cards describing activists who've fought for "justice for all". Students then consider how they might change things for the better in their community and school.

### History Standards

Students should:

#### Human and Civil Rights

- Understand the importance of individual action and character and explain how heroes from long ago and the recent past make a difference in others' lives.
- Learn about the lives of American heroes who took risks to secure freedoms.
- Know that ordinary Americans have struggled for individual rights.
- Know that ordinary Americans have struggled for the common good.
- Know that liberty and equality are among the main principles of American democracy.

#### Civics

- Understand how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.
- Know historical and contemporary examples of citizen movements seeking to promote individual rights and the common good (e.g., abolition, suffrage, labor and civil rights movements).
- Know that civil rights efforts strived to reduce discrepancies between ideals and the reality of American public life.
- Know qualities leaders should have such as commitment to the values and principles of constitutional democracy, respect for the rights of others, ability to work with others, reliability or dependability, courage, honesty, ability to be fair, intelligence, willingness to work hard, and special knowledge or skills.

**Sources:** *National Social Studies Standards by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS); Center for Civic Education (CCE); National Standards for Civics and Government; Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL)*

### Materials & Preparation

Read through the lesson in its entirety and highlight sections you want to cover, given your particular time constraints and group of students.

- Photocopy and cut out the 24 "Advocates for Human Rights" scripts. Feel free to revise wording as needed to suit the age level of your students. If you'd like to include other advocates, type up additional scripts of your own. See the concluding sample "Letter to Parents/Guardians". Send copies home to extend the activity outside of the classroom. Feel free to revise or to incorporate into an e-mail, newsletter, voicemail, or other correspondence with parents and guardians.

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**Procedure****Opening Brainstorm****Time Estimate:** 10-15 minutes

- Lead off with following statement and discussion questions. Compile separate lists of answers on the board.
 

“Let’s talk about the many different ways people work to change the world for the better.”

  1. What are some of the *jobs* people do that help make the world a better place? What does it mean to “make the world a better place”? Does the world need to be better?
  2. What are different ways people work *outside of work* to help out in the community? Tell us about someone you actually know and the things he or she does to make the world a better place.
  3. What sorts of things have *you* done to help others or the world in some way?  
Prompts, if needed: Walked for hunger? Given blood? Written a letter to save an endangered animal? Made dinner or a card for a sick relative? Fought to preserve a local pond? Held a bake sale to raise money for a good cause?
  4. Who can guess what the word “activist” means and how it ties into our lists on the board?

**Summarize and segue into the activity:**

*There are so many ways that people can take action to make the world a better place, both on and off the job! Throughout your lives, you’ll have opportunities to speak and act on behalf of what you think needs changing for the better. Some of these causes might be small, others big. The history of this country is the history of ordinary citizens—like you and me—who had the skill and the guts to advocate for both small and big causes. Let’s get acquainted with some of the people who took on the big issues—justice, equality and basic human rights for others—and learn about what they did to make the world a better place.*

**Activist Summit****Time Estimate:** 10-15 minutes

- Hand out one “Advocates for Human Rights” script to each student. Decide whether it would be wise to assign male advocates to boys, females to girls.
- One at a time, students stand up and “introduce themselves”—reading their short script.

**Afterwards, congratulate students:**

*What a remarkable and courageous group of people! You are champions for justice and equality. Hundreds of thousands of people—and animals and trees—have benefited because of your actions. This world is a better place because of you. Thank you for your care, skill and daring.*

**Powerful Personal Qualities****Time Estimate:** 10-15 minutes**Lead in to the brainstorm:**

*Keep in mind: Each one of these remarkable advocates was once your age. Like you, they each developed certain skills and qualities so that, when the time came, they were ready to stand up for people and causes they believed in.*

- Students brainstorm answers to this question: “Let’s brainstorm. What are some qualities these activists share in common?” Compile a list on the board. E.g., brave, unselfish, helpful, courageous, strong, daring, risk-takers, admirable, etc. Prompts, if needed: Were they quitters? Did they shy away from taking risks? Were they afraid of conflict? Were they willing to be disliked/unpopular to do what they felt was right?
- Pose the following questions, one at a time, and allow students one minute to write down answers. In lieu of writing, ask students to take turns discussing their answers with a partner.
  1. Take a look at our list on the board. Which quality do you admire most, and why?
  2. Look at the list again. Which qualities do you think you possess—to any degree?
  3. Which of these qualities would you most like to develop, and why?
- Ask for volunteers to share any or all of their answers with the larger group.

**Concluding remarks:**

*You don’t have to change the course of history to make an important difference in the world. If we each do our small part—both in and outside of school, both on and off the job—the world will be so much better for it!*

**Optional Extensions**

**Act Up! Action Research**



Older students research work that *remains to be done* on the issue that concerned their activist. E.g., If the activist is Ryan White, what problems face people with AIDS today? Has a cure been found? If the activist is Harriet Tubman, slavery has ended, but what about racism? What might Harriet think or say if she could visit us today? When presenting findings, students assume the role of their activist, as though he or she were commenting now; e.g., “I’m Jane Addams and I’m outraged to discover...” After each presentation, students brainstorm action steps they might take to further the cause. The class chooses one issue of concern, then generates and carries out a group action plan: There is strength in numbers!

**School Action Step**



Younger students decide on something they’d like to change for the better in school and take positive action toward that change. Brainstorm a list: “If you could change one thing for the better in our classroom or school, what would you change, and why?” Help students choose one issue to tackle together. Prompts, if needed: Which issue affects the most people? Which problem might be the quickest to solve? Which problem might take the longest to solve? Students come up with and carry out an action plan. E.g., write a letter to the principal advocating for a cleaner playground, more art supplies, a fresh coat of paint on lockers, better vegetables at lunch, etc.

**Portrait Poster Design Contest**

Using crayons or cray-pas, students create two “activist” portraits, side by side: a chosen activist and themselves. Give out awards for “Most Creative,” “Most Inspiring,” “Most Colorful,” etc.

**Poem of Many Voices**

Each student comes up with a fitting slogan for his or her given activist. Students stand in a line and, one by one, read slogans aloud. This becomes a “poem of many voices” in support of a better world. Have someone type up the poem, then photocopy, so students can take it home.

### ***Design a Postage Stamp***

Working individually or in pairs, students design a new stamp featuring an activist of their choice. Photocopy actual stamps that feature a number of different people and hand these out to students. Discuss the types of notable people who get celebrated on U.S. stamps.

### ***Making a Difference at Work***



Tell kids about ways your workplace contributes to the surrounding community. E.g., Do you sponsor a softball team? Encourage participation in walks for hunger or breast cancer research? Has your business taken larger stands in the world?

### ***Panel Discussion***

If you hold a panel discussion, make sure that employees talk about ways they contribute time and energy *off* the job as well as on. They can also talk about whom they look up to in the world, and why.

### ***Select Resources***

The Giraffe Project ([www.giraffe.org](http://www.giraffe.org)) celebrates people who “stick their necks out” for others.

My Hero ([www.myhero.com](http://www.myhero.com)) is a nonprofit educational project that celebrates “the best of humanity”.

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In conjunction with **Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work® Day**, our class has been discussing “citizenship in action” and ways that people make a difference and take action on behalf of people and causes they care about, both on and off the job. I encourage you to extend this lesson and continue this discussion at home.

*Here are some sample questions/topics for you to discuss with your child:*

Tell your child about someone you think is making a positive difference in the world today. Talk about an issue or cause *you* really care about. This could be an issue affecting the world, our town, or any other community you belong to.

1. Do you think that a kid can make a positive difference in the world?

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Best,

## Human Rights Advocates

Cut out each script and hand out one to each student.

My name is **Fred Korematsu** and I advocated on behalf of the rights of Japanese Americans during World War II. I refused to be relocated to an internment camp and, after the war, I sued the government for violating the rights of American citizens. Because of my efforts against injustice, every person who was interned received \$20,000 in retribution.

My name is **Mary McLeod Bethune** and, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I advocated for poor black children who were denied a public education in the rural south. My mother and father were former slaves and taught me (and my 16 brothers and sisters) the value of education. After I finished my schooling, I paid money out of my own pocket to establish a school in a one-room shack that later became a well-endowed college for African-Americans. I believed in the right of every person to get an education.

My name is **Candy Lightner**. After my 13-year-old daughter was killed by a drunk driver, I advocated for stricter drunk driving laws and founded MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Because I cared enough to take a stand, the roads are safer places for everyone.

My name is **Theodore Roosevelt**. I was the 26<sup>th</sup> president of the United States and I advocated on behalf of the western wilderness. I wanted to make sure that this beautiful land was preserved for future generations like you. Because of my efforts, the national park system was established.

My name is **John Lewis** and I advocated on behalf of the rights of coal miners. My dad was an immigrant coal miner, and I became a miner too and learned about the tremendous dangers of working deep under the earth. After an accident killed 160 miners, I pressured the state legislature to pass safety measures. Because of my actions, coal mines are safer places to work.

My name is **Harriet Tubman** and I advocated for the end of slavery in this country. I was a runaway slave myself and became a “conductor” in the Underground Railroad, a network of secret hiding places and food stops that helped lead southern slaves to freedom in the north. I dared to risk my life for what I believed in and helped bring more than 300 slaves, including my aging parents, to freedom.

My name is **Jane Addams** and I advocated for poor people and immigrants living in the slums of Chicago. When I was 27, it felt like my life didn’t have any purpose. I was too young to feel this way! So I decided to take up a cause and pledged to devote my intelligence and creativity to improving the lives of the urban poor. Two years later, I opened Hull House, a community center that focused on giving poor people hope and self-respect. I fed the hungry, clothed the needy and brought medical care into their lives. President Theodore Roosevelt named me “America’s most useful citizen.”

My name is **Maggie Kuhn** and I founded the Gray Panthers to advocate for the elderly and to fight discrimination based on age. The Gray Panthers supported legislation to regulate nursing homes, we monitored banks and courts, and we worked to end stereotyping of older people in the media. I think it’s outrageous that both the old and young are not taken seriously. People in power positions think the old don’t know much because we don’t do much. And they think of children as not having much to say because they’re children. Yet we both are free to change society!

My name is **Sarah Brady** and I fought on behalf of gun control. My husband Jim was press secretary to President Ronald Reagan when the President was shot and wounded in 1981. Jim got shot too—in the head—and he’s now permanently disabled. I decided to take a public stand in support of gun control and pressed senators to pass a bill requiring a 7-day waiting period before a person can buy a gun. The Brady Bill passed in 1993.

My name is **Fannie Lou Hamer** and I was one of thousands of ordinary people who fought for civil rights for African Americans in the 1960s. After I and 17 others registered to vote in Mississippi, the police stopped our bus and threw us in jail because they said the bus was painted the wrong color. That same night people shot bullets into my house. But that didn’t stop me. I continued to work on behalf of voting rights and equal rights for all.

## SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITIES

My name is **Humberto Medeiros** and I advocated on behalf of Mexican American migrant workers in the 1950s. I was a humble Catholic priest, and then a bishop in Brownsville, Texas. Most of my parishioners were migrant workers and I supported them when they went on strike to ask for a decent, living wage.

My name is **Harvey Milk** and I advocated on behalf of civil rights for gay Americans. I was the country's first openly gay public official in San Francisco. I fought for the defeat of Proposition 6, a state initiative that would have made it illegal for gay people to teach in public schools.

My name is **Cesar Chavez** and I advocated on behalf of immigrant farm workers. I came from a family of migrant workers and watched Mexican-Americans come to California and work for wages so low that they couldn't feed or clothe their families. Their children had to quit school to work in the fields and the pesticides made them sick and burned their eyes. They were housed in shacks that didn't even have drinking water. I was outraged and organized a union called the United Farm Workers of America. Because I cared enough to take action, many farm workers now enjoy higher wages and better living conditions.

My name is **Ryan White** and I advocated for people with AIDS. I contracted AIDS through a blood transfusion when I was 13. After that, I wasn't welcome anywhere. People in my hometown fought to keep me out of school, I was the target of jokes and lies, and our house was frequently vandalized. Waiters would throw away the dishes I had eaten off of. Even in church, people refused to shake my hand. I realized that all of this happened out of ignorance and fear. So I decided to dedicate my life to educating people about the disease. I traveled around the country with my mom, talking about AIDS and answering questions about my experience. When I died, at age 18, people were finally beginning to get it: AIDS is a disease, not a dirty word.

My name is **Marion Wright Edelman** and I am an advocate for children's rights. In 1973 I founded the Children's Defense League to provide a voice for children who don't have a voice or a vote in national politics, particularly those who are poor or handicapped. I continue to lobby on behalf of children's rights to be sure the country's youngest citizens are taken into account when legislators make public policy.

My name is **Samuel Gridley Howe** and I'm considered the father of the disability rights movement. I was a doctor in the 1800s and worked mainly with the blind. I hated to see blind or other disabled people abandoned or shut away in institutions, which was common back then. I believed in the fundamental humanity of all people and insisted that the disabled should be treated with confidence, rather than pity. I opened up many schools that helped integrate disabled people into mainstream society.

My name is **Sojourner Truth** and I spoke out for both the abolition of slavery and for women's rights. I don't even know exactly when I was born. I only count my age from the time I was emancipated from slavery. That's when I began to live. After that, I decided to travel through the country, preaching a message of universal equality.

My name is **Susan B. Anthony** and I advocated on behalf of the human rights of women. I decided to vote in the 1872 presidential election—and found myself arrested and fined \$100 (a lot of money back then)! I organized a door-to-door campaign to collect signatures for a petition to give women the right to vote and to own their own property. This became a model for other grass-roots organizers.

My name is **Josephine Griffing**. I was a white woman who advocated on behalf of slaves and freed slaves. My home in Ohio was a stop on the underground railroad where I offered rest and safety to escaped slaves. I spoke up at hundreds of antislavery meetings and lobbied Congress to end slavery. After slavery was abolished, I lobbied Congress again to help rebuild the lives of freed slaves. Just freeing slaves was not enough, I insisted. The country had to make up for its horrendous past treatment of African Americans.

My name is **Paul Cuffe** and I advocated for African American voting rights after the American Revolution. I was a black business leader in Massachusetts. I owned a small fleet of trading ships and paid my taxes like other citizens, but because I was black, I was denied the right to vote. So I sent a petition to the Massachusetts legislature. They rejected it, but I didn't give up. I refused to pay my taxes—and got thrown in jail. In 1783, a Massachusetts court ruled that black male taxpayers had a right to vote.

My name is **Cleveland Amory** and I helped organize the animal activist movement. In 1967, I founded the Fund for Animals. Our motto was "We speak for those who can't." I raised awareness of animal cruelty and took steps to end animal abuse. For instance, our group helped save baby seals that were being clubbed to death in Canada for their coats. We bought a British trawler and painted the seals with organic red dye that didn't hurt the seals, but that made their fur worthless to hunters.

My name is **Tecumseh** and I was a chief of the Shawnee tribe who advocated on behalf of all Native Americans. I believed that where there is unity, there is strength. So I tried to unite all Native American tribes from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico to oppose the white settlers who were encroaching on our land and threatening our way of life. I spent much of my career campaigning among the tribes of the Old Northwest Territories to win recruits to this confederate cause.

My name is **Clara Barton** and I advocated on behalf of those who are victims of war and natural disasters. During the Civil War, even though nurses weren't allowed on the battlefields, I went anyway to help the wounded and dying soldiers. I later founded the American Red Cross, devoted to the relief of suffering in peace as well as in war.

My name is **Thurgood Marshall** and I was the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States. Etched in stone over its entrance are the words "Equal Justice Under Law" and I was committed to applying those words to all people, black and white. I advocated on behalf of the racial integration of schools. I believed that a segregated education was not an equal education. Because of my efforts, boys and girls of all races and ethnicities can go to school together.

# On and Off the Job: Oral History Interviews

**Time Estimate:** **Preparation:** 20-25 minutes

**Interview:** conducted as homework

**Debriefing:** 15 minutes

## Overview

Girls and boys conduct one-on-one interviews with adults to hear different perspectives on work, making life decisions, the challenges of balancing work and family lives, and ways to make a positive difference in the world both on and off the job.

## History Standards

Students should:

### Civic Responsibility

- Understand the meaning of civic responsibility.
- Understand the meaning of personal responsibility.

### Language Arts Standards

Students should:

### Listening and Speaking

- Use listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
- Adjust use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences.

### Life Skills Standards

Students should:

### Working with Others

- Display effective interpersonal communication skills.
- Demonstrate leadership skills.
- Know strategies to effectively communicate in a variety of settings (e.g., select appropriate strategy for audience and situation).
- Use nonverbal communication such as eye contact, body position, and gestures effectively.

### Career Goals and Options

- Understand how hobbies, personal interests, and aptitudes can lead to a career.
- Understand preferred working environments (e.g., self-employment versus working for others).
- Understand the option of self-employment.
- Understand the option of working for someone else.

### Personal Skills and Values

- Evaluate potential career choices in relation to personal interests, strengths, and values.

**Sources:** *National Social Studies Standards by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS); Center for Civic Education (CCE): National Standards for Civics and Government; National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): Standards in Practice; Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL)*

**Materials & Preparation**

Read through the lesson in its entirety and highlight sections you want to cover, given your particular time constraints and group of students.

- Photocopy the “On and Off the Job Interview” handout, one per student.
- Ask several adults in school to volunteer to be interview subjects. If any students have difficulty identifying a person to interview, refer them to one of these volunteers.
- Decide on a due date for the assignment.
- Decide how you’ll require students to report on their findings.

See the concluding sample “Letter to Parents/Guardians”. Send copies home to extend the activity outside of the classroom. Feel free to revise or to incorporate into an e-mail, newsletter, voicemail, or other correspondence with parents and guardians.

**Procedure**

**Brainstorm & Class Discussion**

**Time Estimate:** 10-15 minutes

Introduce the activity, posing a quick series of questions to prompt students’ thinking. Feel free to draw from the sample script; change wording as needed to suit your age group of students:

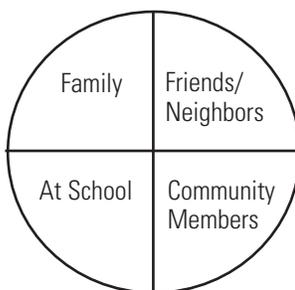
*“What is your job today?... Your work is going to school: Legally, you have to be here throughout the academic year. When you graduate from high school, what will you do for work? Will you work just to make money? Will you pursue a passion? How will your work contribute to the world? Notice whether this is something you’ve thought about already. For some of you, it may be clear what work you’re interested in. For others, you may have only the inkling of an idea. Either way, that’s fine. One way to get ideas is to talk to adults you know about their jobs!*

*If you could talk to someone who was once in school, like you, and now is out in the working world, what sorts of things would you like to ask him or her?... You’re going to get the chance to do this: You’re going to conduct interviews with people about the decisions they’ve made that have shaped their lives—in particular, their work lives.”*

Help students decide whom to interview through a quick brainstorm. Write the title “Adults on the Job” on the board and draw a large circle underneath. Divide the circle into quadrants and, in each, write a category for students to use as a reference point: “Family,” “Friends/Neighbors,” “At School” “Community Members”.

[Example image]

**Adults on the Job**



- Ask students to draw circles of their own and in each quadrant to write down names of adults they know whose work they find interesting in *any way*—a teacher, coach, local public official, dog catcher, short-order cook, etc. Emphasize that the work doesn't have to be glamorous or high paying. There is something interesting and worthy to be found in every job.
- Prompts if needed: How about your parents? What about your next-door neighbor? Do you know a man or woman who works in a non-traditional job (e.g., a female construction worker, a male nurse)? Who keeps this school running? What about the volunteer lunch lady? The groundskeeper? The custodian, who has all the keys to everything?
- Students choose one person from their list to interview. Go around the room and ask students to tell whom they chose, the work this person does, and why they find this interesting.
- Pose questions to prompt students' thinking:
  1. Do you have any idea how your person got his or her job? Was this a lifelong dream? Did they need to get specific education or training?
  2. Does your person raise children and work at the same time? How do they manage this?
  3. Do you have any idea how your person makes a difference in the world when they're off the job?



**Option:** Younger students can conduct an interview as a class. Help students decide together whom they'd like to interview—perhaps someone in the school whose work interests them. Students make an interview "invitation" and deliver this to the chosen interviewee. During the interview, each student asks one question from the "On and Off the Job" interview handout.



**Option:** If older students conduct a class interview, put them in charge of scheduling and organizing. For example, students call City Hall and find out who handles the mayor's schedule, write up a telephone script, decide who will make the phone call, and discuss ways to respond if they run into stumbling blocks.

## Interview Preparation and Assignment

**Time Estimate:** 10 minutes

- Distribute one "On and Off the Job Interview" handout to each student. Ask a student to read the script and instructions aloud. Allow students to rephrase questions in language that feels more natural to them. They can also add questions of their own. Discuss the difference between open and closed-ended questions to help avoid soliciting "yes/no" answers.
- Assign a due date and decide how to hold students accountable for their interviews. For instance, summarize key points from their interview in a comic strip, on a poster, or in 3-minute class presentations. See "Optional Extensions" for more ideas.

## Interview Follow-Up and Debriefing

**Time Estimate:** 15 minutes

- Ask students to pair up and tell their partner whom they interviewed, one or two interesting things they learned.
- Ask students a few general questions about the interview process itself:
  1. What was it like interviewing an adult? Had you ever done this before? What did you like? Was anything hard?
  2. How did your adult react to being interviewed?

Pose questions about student findings:

1. What kind of advice did you get about work?
2. Would you want to be in the shoes of the person you interviewed? Why or why not?
3. What are ways people work to change the world for the better *outside* of their jobs?

### Optional Extensions

## Biographical Snapshot Book

**Time Estimate:** 20-30 minutes

Students review their interview notes, think back, and “see” one thing the person said about his or her work that especially stands out. Using crayons, cray-pas or tempera paint, students capture this picture on paper and add a caption: perhaps a quotation or piece of advice. Each drawing serves as one page in a class book.

## Group Accordion Poem

**Time Estimate:** 15-20 minutes

- Divide the class into groups of six to eight students. Each group begins with one blank piece of paper onto which every one will write a line to create a poem.
- Ask students to take a moment to think about what stands out most from their interviews. A piece of advice? A person’s dreams? A story of conflict or challenge?
- Explain the directions for writing an accordion poem and for folding the paper like a fan.

*“Together your group is going to write a poem line by line. The first line reads A person told me... The first person should write this, then add one line of his/her own underneath. Fold the paper over so only your line shows. Pass this to the next person, who adds a line and folds it over so only the added line shows. The last person adds his or her line ad this closing: And I never want to forget.”*

### Example (lines 2-4 are based on interviews):

**Line 1:** A person told me ...  
**Line 2:** She dreamed of being an opera singer  
**Line 3:** He wishes he had more time for his kids  
**Line 4:** I need to walk tall in the world  
**Last Line:** And I never want to forget.

- Ask each group to read its accordion poem aloud to the class. Invite students to copy their poems and give them as thank-you gifts to people they interviewed.

## Work Across Generations: Group Interview

**Time Estimate:** 1 class period

Ask students to invite senior citizens to class—grandparents, great aunts and uncles, elderly neighbors—to discuss how work and attitudes toward work have changed over time. Set this up as a panel discussion: Students pose questions from the “On and Off the Job Interview” handout and generate new questions of their own.

## Non-Traditional Jobs: Group Interview

**Time Estimate:** 1 class period

Students name men and women they know who work in non-traditional jobs (e.g., a male pastry chef, nurse, or daycare worker; a female contractor, engineer, or surgeon) and invite several people to class to participate in group interview or panel discussion about their work, roles, and responsibilities on the job and at home.

## Life Grids: Autobiographical Art Activity

Try the “Life Grids” activity found in “Art” section of this curriculum. Students define their own future goals—in terms of their work, home, and community lives—and then visually map these out on creative grids.



There are numerous ways interviews can be conducted at the workplace. Here are four ideas to consider:

### One-on-One Interviews

**Time Estimate:** 15 minutes

Girls and boys are paired with employees and conduct 15-minute one-on-one interviews, drawing upon questions from the “On and Off the Job Interview” handout.

### Group Interview

**Time Estimate:** 15-20 minutes

Girls and boys conduct a group interview of one employee. Each student chooses 2 questions to pose from the “On and Off the Job Interview” handout.

### Panel Discussion

**Time Estimate:** 20-30 minutes

Girls and boys pose questions to a panel of employees, each of whom holds a different job in the company.

## Male/Female Interviews

**Time Estimate:** 30 minutes

Girls and boys conduct “team” interviews with a male/female pair of employees to learn about their differing—and similar—perspectives on work, family, and ways to make a positive difference in the world. Divide students into interview teams of 4; each team meets with a pair of employees. Each student poses 2 questions: both the man and woman take turns answering. Each team chooses “reporters” to introduce their adult pair to the larger group. Allow teams a few minutes to come up with three points to highlight in each introduction.

## Company History

**Time Estimate:** 10-15 minutes

Point out that *everything* has a history, not only people. Be sure to fill girls and boys in on the history of your company. When, why, and how was the company started?

### **Select Resources**

On a kids’ page sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor ([www.bls.gov/k12/](http://www.bls.gov/k12/)), students can research jobs by job titles and find out job descriptions, salary ranges, and information on how to prepare for any given job.

The Small Business Association features a site for students ([www.sba.gov/teens/](http://www.sba.gov/teens/)) that walks students through everything from generating an idea for a business, to writing a business plan, to managing money.

## On and Off the Job Interview

Name of Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

Back-Up Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Tips for a Great Interview***

- Invite an adult to join you in a 20-minute interview about work.
- Explain your assignment and set up a time and a quiet place to meet.
- Read through the questions and highlight 3 sections that you want to cover first.
- Listen carefully and give your interviewee your full attention.
- Ask “How come?” or say “Please tell me more” when you want to know more.
- Audiotape the interview or jot down specific words and points you want to remember.
- Thank your interviewee for his or her time and generosity!

### ***Some Questions to Ask about Work***

#### ***Advice about Work***

What were you told about work when you were my age? What do you wish someone had told you then about work? What do you think I need to know?

#### ***On Parents & Work***

What kind of work did your mother do? What did she say about her work? What effect did her work have on your life? Could your mom have gotten your job? What did your father do? Did you ever go to work with him?

#### ***On the Job***

What was your first job and how old were you? What do you do now at work? Why did you choose this work? Did you need special training? What do you like most about your work? What would you change about it? What happens when you make a mistake? Do men and women face different kinds of challenges at work?

#### ***Dreams***

What did you say as a child when asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Have you followed your dreams—how or why not? Who offered you encouragement? Has anyone ever discouraged you? What did they say and how did you respond?

#### ***Role Models & Mentors***

Was there anyone you wanted to be like when you were a kid? Why did you admire that person? Who are your role models now and what do you see in them? Have you ever had a mentor who gave you special help?

#### ***Home Work***

Is your work done when you leave the job? What are your responsibilities at home? How do you balance your job with being part of a family? How could this be made easier? What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

#### ***Changing the World***

What do you do to change the world for the better *outside* of work? Have you ever taken a stand on behalf of a cause or issue you care about? Your boss says to you one morning, “I’m giving you a surprise day off. Leave work and do some community service.” Where do you offer your help and why?

<sup>1</sup> Based on an activity in *Citizenship in Action: Bringing Civics to Life in Middle School* by Lisa Sjoström and Nora Mann (Cambridge, MA: Middlesex County District Attorney’s Office, 2003). Order online from [www.projectalliance.org](http://www.projectalliance.org).

## Dear Parents and Guardians,

In conjunction with **Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work® Day**, our class has been preparing to conduct interviews with adults to hear different perspectives on work, making life decisions, the challenges of balancing work and family lives, and ways to make a positive difference in the world both on and off the job. I encourage you to extend this lesson and continue this discussion at home.

### *Here are some sample questions/topics for you to discuss with your child:*

1. What were you told about work when you were your child's age? What do you wish someone had told you then about work? What do you think your child needs to know?
2. What do you like most about your work? What would you change about it?
3. What did you say as a child when asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Have you followed your dreams—how or why not? Who offered you encouragement? Has anyone ever discouraged you? What did they say and how did you respond?
4. How can you help your child prepare to realize his or her dreams?

Thank you for your interest and participation.

Best,