

Activity Guide: Career Case Files

Career Case Files is a multi-part activity that helps students investigate the career journeys of people in their community. From this, students will form connections with community members, hear real-life career stories, and find that various avenues can lead to a successful career.

Example Uses:

- As a meeting activity
- As a springboard for a chapter project (collecting and sharing local career stories)
- As material students can draw on in college essays, scholarship prompts, or internship interviews

Before the Activity:

- Ask each student to show up with the name of one or more local people they could interview for this activity. This may be a family member, alum, neighbor, business owner, community leader, etc.
- Advisors bring 3-5 pre-identified community contacts in case students get stuck.

Activity Outline

1) Warm Opener (5 min)

Quick stand-up poll:

- "Raise your hand if you're 100% sure what you want to do after graduation."
- "Raise your hand if you've changed your mind in the last 12 months."

Takeaway: changing direction is normal, many people do it.

2) Team Setup (5 min)

Assign teams or allow students to form teams of 3-4. Each team picks one local contact to interview prior to the next meeting/class/gathering.

Next, assign roles. Example of roles include:

- Connector: Schedules and leads the interview
- Mapper: Creates a graphic depiction of the interviewee's career pathway
- Insight Lead: Pulls out important themes, advice, and other takeaways from interview
- Case Presenter: Leads the presentation of what the team learned from their interview

3) Pathway Investigation (12-15 min)

Have teams draft a hypothesis of the chosen person's pathway before interviewing, based on what they already know and quick research. They are building a "case file" before they discuss with the real person.

3) Pathway Investigation - CONTINUED

Question examples:

- What do we think their first career idea was?
- What skills/experiences likely mattered most?
- What community forces shaped their path? (mentors, local opportunities, barriers)
- What might surprise a student about this career?

Teams may use any resources to understand the career environment, including articles, videos, job postings, or exploratory platforms like CareerViewXR.

4) Fast Share (8-10 min)

Each team gives a 60-90 second “pre-interview pitch”. They present their pathway hypothesis like a mini-business brief, answering the questions they analyzed during their investigation. Offer quick feedback to groups.

5) Interview Assignment (7 min)

Give teams the interview rules and presentation guidelines. Adjust to best fit your needs.

Rule examples:

- 20–25 minute interview within a given time period
- Presentation must be at least 4 minutes
- Use provided questions from interview guide & answer them during presentation
- Ask permission before recording/quoting
- Ask for pictures of interviewee to support presentation & career pathway design
- Thank you email or letter required

Presentation & Career Pathway design format examples:

- Poster, Short slideshow, Mock TED talk, Flow chart, Mock storybook, etc.

Advisor frames next step: after interviews, teams will return ready to present on their chosen individual and share their career pathway visual.

Interview Guide: Example Interview Questions

The following are examples of interview questions you can provide to your students. Adjust to best fit your needs. Encourage students to ask unique follow-up questions as needed.

- “When you were in high school/college, what did you think you’d do?”
- “What was your first-ever job and how did you get it?”
- “What other roles have you held throughout your career journey?”
- “What were 2–3 moments or decisions that shaped where you are now?”
- “Was there a person who opened a door for you?”
- “Which skills matter most in your work that students might not realize?”
- “What’s a skill you wish you’d started building earlier?”
- “What’s something people misunderstand about this field?”
- “Who tends to get overlooked in this career and how can that change?”
- “If a student here wanted to explore this career, what should they do next in our community?”

6) Presentation Day

After students have been given the desired amount of time to interview and prepare their presentations, it is time to share their findings with the group.

7) Optional Follow-Up Activities

If you're wanting to continue the Career Case Files fun, we've provided a few optional follow-ups below.

- Personal Reflection
 - After presentations, have each student reflect on all presentations given. Example prompts: "What are your biggest takeaways?", "What surprised you the most?", "Which careers discussed grabbed your interest and why?"
- Further Industry Investigation
 - After the interview, have teams or individuals do further research on their interviewee's industry and compare their findings to what they learned from the interview and write a short essay. Example prompts: "What matched out local professional's reality?", "What is different about this industry/role in other locations?", "What new questions do you have about the industry/role?", "What may have changed in the industry since interviewee began?"

Thanks for trying our activity!

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