AOHS Health Careers Exploration

Guest Speaker Guide

In an effort to present students with first-hand information about health careers, five of the lessons in this course give students an opportunity to interact with guest speakers who are professionals from the health industry. Because this is a course specifically about careers, the guest speaker visits are more than just a way to break up the classroom routine; they are a critical and valuable component of the curriculum. Finding the right guest speakers and scheduling them to visit your class can be a challenge. The purpose of this resource is to help you start planning for guest speakers at the very beginning of the semester and to encourage you to do what's necessary to make this element of the curriculum a success.

Planning Ahead

You can start now to recruit the following guest speakers:

* Lesson 6: Dietitian
* Lesson 7: Health care professional who works in a doctor’s office (i.e., medical assistant, receptionist, doctor, nurse practitioner)
* Lesson 8: Radiologist, pathologist, or diagnostic technician
* Lesson 12: Mental health professional
* Lesson 13: Dental hygienist

These professionals will share information about their training, what they like about their jobs, their typical work day, and the knowledge, and skills required to pursue and be successful in their career. Students will have an opportunity to ask questions of the professionals. The visits also give students a chance to practice professional behavior and to elevate their comfort level in communicating with professionals.

Use the Semester Planning Table included in the Course Planning Tools folder for this course to plan out your semester and establish dates for guest speakers. If you set some possible dates for guest speakers to visit your classroom at the very outset of the semester, it is likely to be much easier to recruit your speakers.

Finding Guest Speakers

There are several sources you might consider consulting to find appropriate guest speakers. First, start with your academy advisory board. Members of the advisory board are often well suited to be guest speakers, but almost more importantly, they can help connect you with other health care professionals they know. Consider meeting with your advisory board and giving them the list of guest speakers you need. Ask them to brainstorm together and give you as many ideas as possible of potential guest speakers, as well as have them reach out to appropriate professionals for you.

If you’ve exhausted the connections on your advisory board, consider these other sources for guest speaker contacts:

* Career counselors at your school
* Career counselors at local community colleges
* Personal contacts
* Professional health care organizations in your community, such as a free clinic
* The local chapter of a professional health association (View an extensive list here: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/education-careers/careers-health-care/health-professions-associations.page>)

Conducting Visits via Teleconference

Even local professionals may not have the time to make a visit to your classroom. If that is the case, consider using a teleconferencing program, like Skype or Google video, to conduct the meeting. This would allow for students to see the professionals in their own professional setting, and also allows students to ask questions and interact with the speaker. For more information on teleconferencing, visit “How Classroom Video Conferencing Works” (<http://people.howstuffworks.com/classroom-video-conferencing.htm>).

Replacing Guest Speakers with Field Trips

Depending on how your school is set up for field trips, you may want to replace one or two of the guest speakers with a field trip. For example, if you have some students who only visit the doctor or dentist in emergency situations, you may want to have them visit a doctor’s office in Lesson 7 and a dental office in Lesson 13. The medical professional who guides you through the visit could serve the same role as the guest speaker.

Contacting Potential Guest Speakers and Preparing Them for the Visit

When you ask a guest speaker to visit your class, it is important to let the speaker know what to expect. This will help you maximize the speaker’s time in your class. In each lesson that includes a guest speaker, the teacher resource document includes a guide for the guest speaker. Take a look at the guide before you approach a potential guest speaker so you can give the speaker a clear idea of what you are expecting of him or her. You can give the guide to guest speakers to help them prepare for their visit to your classroom.