

CAREER PANELS HANDBOOK

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*Please modify any of these materials as needed!
We hope they help you in providing career panels for your students.*

What are Career Panels?

Career panels are an in-school opportunity for students to interact with professionals in a wide variety of career areas to learn about what it takes to prepare for a specific career and what it takes to be successful in the world of work in general. Students and guest speakers gather in relatively small groups of 15 –35 students, with a moderator, in a structured format for a class period (usually 90 minutes). The discussion is driven by student questions regarding all aspects of the speakers’ career path. Career panels are usually integrated into a specific required class (i.e. Economics or US History) and include some preparation and follow-up activities.

The career panel model has been developed and refined over the past six years based upon student, teacher, counselor, and guest speaker input. Panels usually have 3 or 4 professionals who may be in different career areas or in the same career path (i.e. “health careers” or “information technology”).

Focusing on optimizing student interaction, the Career Panel format creates an informal, respectful discussion venue where students are encouraged to ask questions that matter to them: “What do you like least about your job?” - “How much money do you make?” - “Did you always know that this is what you wanted to do?” - “Do you have enough time for your family?” - “How much education training did you have to get?” - “What would you recommend for me to do now if I want to go into this field?” - “Why were you willing to come here today to speak with us?” - “What’s the best part of your job?”

What are the benefits to students:

- It is powerful for students to see that adults in their community care about them by participating, listening and responding to each student’s question.
- A connection is made between what is being learned in school and the tools they will need for success in the world of work.
- Speakers’ personal stories of their own school and career challenges give students hope.
- Opportunities are created for connecting/networking with local employees/employers.
- Specific information about the best ways to prepare for a specific career area (i.e. volunteering, doing job shadowing, community college programs, or college majors) can be extremely helpful.
- Students hear that it is important to focus on “doing what you love.”

What makes a Career Panel successful?

- **Student preparation:** students know (and often help select) what careers will be represented on the panel(s) and they have a classroom activity for developing questions beforehand.
- **Ratio:** One panel per one class of students (maximum 35 students), 3 or 4 speakers per panel.
- **Time frame:** Panels need to be held during an extended period (90 – 110 minutes) to allow for full student participation and refreshment time at the end of the period for one on one interaction between speakers and students.
- **Grade level:** Optimally, panels will be held at the 11th grade level. Panels may be held for 10th, 12th or mixed grade-level groups depending upon the specific class and student preparation.
- **Format:** Panel speakers sit with the students, with the chairs or desks arranged in a circle format. The classroom teacher welcomes the guests and introduces the moderator for the group. The moderator (usually from the business/education intermediary group or the business community) greets the students and speakers, explains the format and initiates an ice breaker “what’s my line”. The moderator asks for a student volunteer who, with the help of his/her classmates, tries to figure out which speaker is representing which career. After the guessing and laughing, the moderator asks for the “real” _____ to please stand up! Once the speakers are all identified and briefly introduce themselves, the moderator begins the student questions. Each student asks a question which they would like one or all the speakers to answer. Questioning proceeds around the room until each student has had a turn. If there is time students can ask additional or follow up questions. The last 15 minutes is allotted for refreshments, one on one discussions, and sharing any materials the speakers have brought with them.

What are the responsibilities of the school?

Administration/Counseling:

- Secure funding for coordination costs.
- Provide refreshments for guest speakers and students.
- Provide for parking arrangements/guest passes for speakers (can be 8 – 12 guests per period).

Instructors:

- Staff support for integrating career panels into a class.
- Student preparation activities: discussion of careers, explanation of career panel format, identify top student career interests, preparation of student questions, follow-up debrief discussion and completion of teacher and student evaluations.
- Day of event support: greet moderators and speakers, facilitating classroom management and seating arrangements (students may be shifting around to different classrooms, chairs or desks need to be put into circle format).
- Encouraging students to write thank you letters or emails to guest speakers.
- Debrief with YFIOB coordinators: What worked well? What needs improvement?

Students:

- Help identify top career areas of interest in your class.
- Develop and write down three questions for the career panel guests.
- Come prepared to the panel discussion (bring your questions and participate fully).
- Be respectful of guests and classmates.
- Complete required follow-up assignments and evaluation form.

What are the responsibilities of the Career Panel Coordinator?

PLANNING:

Meet with program or school site “point person” (may be an administrator, counselor, or teacher) to determine dates, time, schedule, classes/teachers, and number of panels requested. If this is a new program or school, you will need to meet staff involved to explain the process, career panel activity and answer questions.

SPEAKER RECRUITMENT::

- **Lay out a schedule of the day(s) based upon speaker requests:**
 - Provide classroom support, obtaining student requests, if necessary.
 - Use school site parent list for speaker recruitment, if available.
 - Use previous years’ speaker lists for initial recruitment.
 - Use WorkPlaceConnections.net for additional speaker recruitment.
 - **NOTE:** Email has proven to be the most efficient way to contact/confirm speakers.
 - When contacting speakers by phone, use the YFIOB office number for return calls: 477-5651. A specific voice mailbox extension will be set up for career panels’ coordination. This phone mailbox can be accessed from any phone by calling: 477-5000 and entering the extension and password.
 - Recruit new/additional speakers when necessary. Be sure to obtain complete information on the new speakers: name, organization, address, email, phone, fax, job title. Ask if we can list them on WorkPlaceConnections.net.
 - Recruit one moderator per panel. You can be a moderator, and a list of possible moderators can be provided by YFIOB staff.

- **When speaker recruitment is completed:**

Relay a copy of the speaker schedule to the program/school point person so any necessary adjustments/clarifications can be made. When more than one panel is occurring at a time, it is important to assure that relatively equal numbers of students will attend each panel. Making shifts of speakers on the schedule may be necessary. Student sign up sheets are needed (you may need to visit the classrooms to help in this process).

 - Confirm which rooms the speakers will be in and what parking arrangements will be.
 - Confirm who at the school will help greet speakers (encourage student greeters!).
 - Confirm that refreshments will be provided.

- **Create speaker information sheet** (see example attached) and email or fax this out (depending on preference) to the confirmed speakers one week before the career panel dates.

- **Send moderator guidelines out** (see attached).

- **Make confirmation calls/emails** to all speakers and moderators two days before their scheduled date(s).

NOTE: It is important to verify/obtain complete contact information on all speakers and moderators including: phone, fax, mailing and email addresses. All participants should be mailed thank you letters and evaluations after career panels are completed.

DAY OF EVENT SUPPORT:

- **Plan to arrive early on the day of the panels** (at least half an hour before any speakers are expected). Help greet speakers and moderators, review the format, and escort speakers to assigned rooms.
- **Moderate panel(s) and thank speakers.**
- **Give evaluation sheet packets to all teachers** (this includes student and teacher evaluations) and set a date to pick up the completed evaluations. Student quotes are used on the thank you letters that are sent out to speakers.

FOLLOW UP:

- **Create speaker and moderator thank you letter**, using student/teacher quotes, and mail out with a speaker evaluation form within one week of the career panels (see attached).
- **Do follow-up debrief with school staff** (what worked well, what needs improvement, any problematic speakers or moderators?)
- **Enter new speakers and/or updates into WorkPlaceConnections.net.**

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES:

- There are two types of career panels:
 - “General” – speakers from mixed career areas (usually based upon student interest)
 - “Focused” – speakers from a targeted career area (example: health careers) (usually based upon a specific class, teacher or industry focus)
- Speaker recruitment is primarily based upon student input, however, YFIOB has the option of choosing speakers to participate who represent viable career options (i.e. health careers, construction trades, information technology) or who are dynamic and informative.
- WorkPlaceConnections.net should be used to create/list the career panel event, find and manage participants, and to create mailing labels for the thank you letters.
- It is important for the school staff and the YFIOB coordinator to remember that all the speakers and moderators are volunteering their time (which, including travel time, amounts to about 3 hours of their day).
- **Websites:**
 - *Your Future Is Our Business* - www.yfiob.org
 - **WorkPlaceConnections database** - www.workplaceconnections.net

Program/School site: _____

Point Person: _____ **Contact info:** _____

Other contacts: _____

Date(s) for career panels: _____

Students

Career panels give you the opportunity to speak with people from the community about:

- What they do
- How they got there
- The challenges and rewards

The speakers come to answer **YOUR questions**. All students are expected to participate. So that you will be prepared, please take a few minutes to write down three questions that you would like to ask. What would you really like to find out?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

NOTES:

Remember to bring this sheet with you to the career panel!

Twenty possible questions for Career Panel speakers

This list is to help students get ideas. **It is important for students to come up with their own questions**, based upon interest, experience and curiosity. Each student will be expected to ask one question. It is recommended that each student write down at least 3 questions and bring them to panel.

- 1. What do you like best about your job? Least?**
- 2. Why are you willing to come here today and speak with us?**
- 3. What do you do for fun, in your free time?**
- 4. If you could have done something differently in high school, what would it have been?**
- 5. Did you have a role model?**
- 6. What high school class did you think was a waste of time that you realize now was valuable?**
- 7. What high school activity taught you skills that are valuable to you now?**
- 8. Did you ever do any volunteering? What did you get out of it?**
- 9. What was the most important thing you got out of high school that has helped you now?**
- 10. How do you balance time between your career and your family?**
- 11. If you could change something about your job, what would it be?**
- 12. How do you deal with the stressful parts of your job?**
- 13. What advice do you give your own kids about careers?**
- 14. What is the biggest turn-off to you when someone comes in to apply for a job?**
- 15. What reasons do people get fired for in your business?**
- 16. Do you still have to keep getting training for what you do?**
- 17. Are you considering making a major career change in the future?**
- 18. How many hours a week do you work?**
- 19. What is the pay range for your career?**
- 20. What do you know now, that you wish you would have known when you graduated from high school?**

Your Future Is Our Business

Career Panels

Santa Cruz High School

October 24, 2000

Student Evaluation

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

1. What did you learn today that can help you in your future goals or plans?

2. Which speaker did you find most interesting? _____

Why? _____

3. How well did you like the format of the presentations?

Didn't like 1 2 3 4 5 Liked

4. What did you hear today that surprised you? _____

5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the career panels for future classes who attend?

Thanks, your feedback is important to us!

Your Future Is Our Business

Career Panels

San Lorenzo Valley High School

November 2002

Teacher Evaluation

Name: _____

1. Do you think that the career panels were worthwhile to your students?

Not Really 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

2. Do you think that the career panels were worth your time and effort?

Not really 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

3. Do you think that the format worked well?

Not really 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

4. Who were the most effective speakers you heard? Why?

5. Were there any speakers who you feel should not be invited back? Why?

6. What suggestions do you have that could improve the career panels for your students for next year?

7. Please give any suggestions for better preparing students for this experience and for integrating the career panels into your curriculum.

Thanks for your feedback and support!

Career Panels

Thank you for volunteering to participate on the *Your Future Is Our Business* Career Panels for Aptos High School juniors. The panels are held in US History classes.

Aptos High School is located at 703 Freedom Blvd. Directions: Highway 1 south to Freedom Blvd. Exit, go left (back over the freeway). Turn right at the second traffic light. Follow that road up onto campus past all the main buildings until you reach the last row of portables on the right (the “M” buildings). Watch for BALLOONS, greeters will direct you to parking and show you to the correct room.

Here is your scheduled time(s):

Please arrive 10 minutes early to allow time for parking and meeting with your moderator.

Wednesday, April 24th	7:45-9:25 ___	10:40-12:20 <u>X</u>	1:00-2:40 ___
Thursday, April 25th	7:45-9:25 ___	10:40-12:20 ___	1:00-2:40 <u>X</u>

There will be 3 or 4 professionals, representing different careers, on your panel. You will have a panel moderator from *Your Future Is Our Business* as your host. You will be with 20-35 students. The format is informal; speakers sit with the students. We begin with an “ice breaker” (“What’s my line”)! Students guess who is who! **Please do not wear anything that would identify your career!** Speakers briefly introduce themselves. The discussion then proceeds based upon student questions. The last 15/20 minutes is for refreshments and for one on one conversation.

Thank you for your help. By sharing your personal experience, you are helping students to learn...

- what kinds of skill sets are common to most careers
- how career choice is related to lifestyle choice
- what types and levels of jobs are available in this career field
- how a young person should prepare (recommendations for high school courses, related activities, and typical college majors)

If appropriate, please bring any examples of your work, tools of the trade, or handouts.

Students are always interested in visuals and hands-on experiences.

Please contact Stacey Smith at *Your Future Is Our Business* (477-5651) for any schedule questions or unanticipated emergency. We look forward to meeting with you! We appreciate your participation in this activity that helps students in making important life decisions, and supports their “school to career” transitions.

Your Future Is Our Business

Career Panels

Watsonville High School

March - 2003

Speaker Evaluation

Name: _____

Your profession: _____

Name of business/company _____

1. Was serving as a presenter on this career panel worth your time and effort?
Not Really 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

2. Did you receive adequate information beforehand?
Not Really 1 2 3 4 5 Definitely

3. Did you find the length of time and format of the panel appropriate? Yes __ No __
Comments: _____

4. Would you be willing to serve as a presenter again? Yes __ No __

5. Do you have any suggestions for how to improve the career panels?

I would be willing to help students or teachers by:

- ___ Providing a job shadowing opportunity
- ___ Hosting a career panel at my business site
- ___ Offering an informational interview
- ___ Setting up an internship

Thank you for your support and your feedback!

Please FAX this evaluation to 831-477-5636 or mail it to:
Your Future Is Our Business, Cabrillo College, 6500 Soquel Dr., Aptos, CA 95003