

Ideas for E.L.L.s | Teaching and Learning About Work and Careers

By [Larry Ferlazzo](#) • April 1, 2015 3:27 pm



[Related Article](#) Courtney Wirth

What do I want to be when I get older? What career would I excel at? How will I get a job?

These are questions students everywhere think about, and that makes work and careers an engaging topic to explore when teaching English language development. Below, we offer related teaching ideas and strategies using articles, videos and other resources from The New York Times and around

the web.

Job Interviews

By Walt Disney Pictures International on December 11, 2014. Photo by Internet Video Archive.

Role-Playing a Job Interview

In this activity, students watch a short clip from the movie [“Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day”](#) depicting a humorous job interview. Show the video with the sound off so that students have to imagine what the characters are saying.

Then, show the video again, this time in 20-second increments, stopping to give students a minute or two to write down what they think the actors are saying. Be sure to make clear that the point of the activity is not necessarily to pick the exact words said in the clip, but to use words that might be used in a typical interview.

After students have finished writing their dialogue, ask them to get into groups of three or four, compare their scripts and develop a common one that they will use in a skit to be performed in front of the class. To conclude the activity, show the original movie clip with sound so they can compare their words with the actual ones spoken in the video.

Job Interview Dos and Don'ts

Have students watch short movie clips of job interviews from “Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day” or [“The Pursuit of Happyness.”](#) While they watch, students should make a list of both good and bad interview strategies they observe in the videos (e.g., wear professional clothing, arrive on time or don't bring a baby to an interview). Then, ask students to add to their lists based on what they already know about interviews or what they can learn by reading this [Q. and A. on interview skills](#). Have the class share their lists while you make a [T-chart](#) on the board noting their answers.

Next, students should work in pairs to prepare and perform short role plays demonstrating good or bad interview strategies. During the performances, have the rest of the class identify the various strategies students depicted.

Job Interview Cloze

In a typical “cloze” exercise, students have to identify the correct word to fill in a blank in a sentence. You can find many examples in [previous E.L.L. Test Yourself activities](#) published on The Learning Network. But there is also a different type of cloze, in which the location of the blank is not clearly identified. In these exercises, the missing word is shown after a sentence or sentences, and the learner has to choose the correct location for it.

Here is a [student handout](#) (PDF) using this type of cloze based on the Times article [“Subtle Cues Can Tell an Interviewer ‘Pick Me.’”](#) Note that you might need to preteach some of the words (“demeanor” and “enunciate,” for example). Also, tell students that where there are two “fill-in” words listed, they might or might not be in the correct order. In addition, to promote higher-order thinking, ask students to explain — in writing and, later, orally — why they chose to put the words or punctuation marks in specific locations. In other words, they should be thinking about clue words and grammar rules.

Researching and Applying for Jobs



Jocelyn Herrera Lazo found work at Fenway Park through the Boston Private Industry Council, a public-private partnership that finds jobs in the city for high school students. [Related Article](#) Gretchen Ertl for The New York Times

Research Jobs: Students can identify one to three potential jobs of interest and answer the following questions:

- Why am I interested in this job?
- What do people do in this job?
- What are qualifications necessary to get this job — training, experience and schooling?
- What is the pay?
- What would be the most challenging parts of the job and why?
- What are other benefits of doing this job?

Students can research these questions by using a number of resources, including Times [Vocations columns](#), the Times [Jobs site](#) (just type in the name of the occupation in the green search box), the Bureau of Labor Statistics' [Occupational Outlook Handbook](#), and two E.L.L.-accessible sites, [Paws in Jobland](#) and [Career One Stop](#). Students can research salaries by occupation on [Salary.com](#) and search for jobs to gain a sense of what employers are looking for through the Times [Job Market](#).

Write a Résumé: Students can explore many sample résumés for different jobs at the Times [Jobs site](#) and then create their own. There are many free, easy-to-use [résumé-creation tools](#) available online. (The [Read](#)

[Write Think Résumé Generator](#) is one of the best.)

Practice Preparing a Job Application: Students can practice completing a virtual job application online at [The Everyday Life Project](#). (Other job-preparation interactives can be found at the same site.) Library Literacy also has a [useful packet](#) (PDF), including a sample job application, that can be downloaded, copied and distributed to students so they have practice completing a hard copy version.

Other Teaching Ideas About Jobs



The singer Jill Scott, who was being given an honorary doctorate, at graduation ceremonies at Temple University in Philadelphia last year. The pay disparity between those with college degrees and those without continues to grow. [Related Article](#) David Swanson/The Philadelphia Inquirer, via Associated Press

Student-Created Clozes: Students can create their own clozes from Times articles on jobs-related topics and then have their classmates complete them. A key requirement is that they must be strategic in identifying which words to remove and ensuring that there are “clues” to the correct words. Two Times series, [Corner Office](#) and [Vocations](#), provide a wealth of accessible columns related to jobs and careers.

A Work Family Tree: A [previous Learning Network E.L.L. post](#) described having students complete a family tree: a real one about the past

and a “fantasy” version for the future. In a work family tree, students should be sure to include people’s past occupations and their hoped-for future ones. As part of this project, students may want to interview family members about their ancestors’ and relatives’ jobs and careers.

Career Advantages of Going to College: Show students one or both of these Times charts: [this one](#) shows the annual income differences based on educational attainment and [this one](#) shows the hourly-wage difference. After providing the least amount of teacher commentary possible, ask students to write down in as much detail as they can what information and conclusions they can draw from the chart. Have them share with a partner, discuss as a class and perhaps create simple informational and inspirational posters about the importance of a college education that can be hung around the classroom or in the hallways for other students to see.

Bilingual Benefits: [Studies have shown](#), and many families recognize, that being bilingual can result in higher earnings. Two Times articles, [“Why Bilinguals Are Smarter”](#) and [“The Bilingual Advantage,”](#) as well as a related [Student Opinion question](#), discuss additional advantages to bilingualism. Because it is always a positive classroom experience when we can help our students look at themselves through a lens of “assets” instead of “deficits,” teachers can use short excerpts from one or more of these articles as simple read-alouds and prompts for discussion.

Play a Game: There are [many games](#) that can be played in the E.S.L./E.L.L. classroom for review and reinforcement. You can’t go wrong with Jeopardy, and it doesn’t get much easier to create your own personalized version than by using the free [Jeopardy Rocks website](#). My colleague Alma Avalos made [this one](#) for students to play during our unit on jobs and careers.