

encourage®

Lesson Plan

College and Career Activity

For DECA



> **Encourage really helped me decide what I want to do in life as well as how I can get there! 10/10 would recommend!**

-9th Grader, Texas
Sept. 2025

Building Essential Skills

Thank you for exploring our **Career Curiosity** lesson. We've customized this lesson for our partnership with **DECA** to spark student interest in business-specific careers and provide a foundation for their future planning.

We align with DECA's mission to ensure every student is not only exposed to career pathways but also equipped with the academic preparation and leadership skills to thrive. Their important work aligns with our shared goal: empowering students to discover their strengths, set goals, and explore opportunities beyond high school.

While this lesson can be adapted for multiple grade levels, it is specifically designed to support students in grades 7-10 as they begin their career exploration and participate in the **Encourage® College and Career Planning Program.**

Our planning program is complemented by the **Encourage app**, which students aged 13 and above can access via mobile or web, and educators can pull important data and reports to support their learners. Together with DECA, we look forward to helping you inspire curiosity, open doors, and prepare students for informed decisions about their academic and professional journeys.

-The Encourage Team

Career Curiosity

Learning Outcome/Goal:

- Students explore the full range of careers they already know.
- Students select four new careers to explore.
- Students connect a career path to the educational credentials required for that position.

Learning Outcomes:

- Career planning
- Curiosity
- Self-reflection
- Critical thinking

ASCA Student Standards:

- **B-SMS-3:** Independent work
- **B-LS-7:** Academic and career goals
- **B-LS-4:** Self-motivation and self-direction for learning

Materials Needed:

- Career Inventory
- Writing utensil
- Device with internet access
- Optional: Interview worksheet

Suggested Time Allotment: 40-55 Minutes

5-10 Minutes: Outline the activity

This activity is designed to help students reflect on what they already know about careers and discover new careers that might align with their interests.

Students often dream about the jobs they can see, roles represented in their daily lives, social media, or entertainment. Careers that are less visible, like market research analyst, public relations coordinator, or supply chain manager, rarely come to mind simply because students haven't encountered them yet.

When students learn about a wider range of careers, they begin to see that their interests and strengths can connect to many types of work, not just the few that are most visible.

Say to Your Students:
"It's normal to dream about jobs you already see, like athletes or YouTubers. But there are so many other interesting careers out there, some that you might not even know exist yet. Today, we'll think about the jobs you already know and explore different career possibilities."

Career Curiosity

Questions Prompts for Your Class

- What is your dream job today?
- What are some of the jobs your family, family friends, or other adults in your life have that sound interesting?
- What is a job you've heard of but don't know what they do day to day?
- What are the best ways to learn about jobs that could be a good fit for you?
- Do you think it's more important to prioritize a job and then choose a college or to choose a college and let it lead you to a career path? Why?

10 Minutes: Inventory and learn

Distribute the **Career Inventory** and review the following directions:

Take the next 10 minutes to list the careers you know and what kind of education is required for each career. Think about your family, friends, and the people in your community. What are their jobs? Keep listing occupations until you either run out of room or time.

5-10 Minutes: Reflect as a class

Come back together as a class and discuss a few of the following questions that feel most relevant to what you'd like your class to take away:

- What are some of the jobs you wrote down?
- Did you feel confident about the level of education required for that job?
- Who completed their chart?
- Were there any themes you noticed when completing your chart?
- Of the jobs you wrote down, how many have you considered pursuing for your future?

After discussing a few of the questions above, outline the next step of the activity. They will now learn about different jobs they may or may not have heard of before. Have them select a job they know the least about from each category. They will only choose one job from each of the following to continue to research:

- Jobs that require a high school diploma
- Jobs that require a certificate or an associate's degree
- Jobs that require a bachelor's degree
- Jobs that require an advanced degree

Career Curiosity

15 Minutes: Explore new jobs

Instruct students to use the 2nd page of the career inventory and review the following directions:

Learn about four new jobs. Pick and circle one job from each category. Once you've selected the job, visit the **Encourage** app or onetonline.org to learn about each job's salary and responsibilities.

There is space below each education level to write down what they have learned.

5-10 Minutes: Pair and share

Ask students to turn to the student or students next to them and share what they learned, especially as it pertains to the following questions:

- What surprised you?
- Would you consider any of the jobs you researched?

Optional Homework

Involving families and communities in college and career planning can positively impact young peoples' educational and professional goals. To engage these adults, consider assigning students an interview task.

Interview an adult in your life whose career you don't know much about using the questions below:

- What is your job title?
- What do you do day to day?
- What was your educational path to this job?
- What career advice do you have for me?
- What advice would you give to someone who wants a career (job) like yours?

Career Inventory

Directions: Take the next 10 minutes to list the careers you know and what kind of education is required for each job. Think about your family, friends, and the people in your community. What are their jobs? Keep listing occupations until you either run out of room or time.

Job	Education Level	Job	Education Level
Teacher	**Bachelor's Degree**		

Career Inventory

Directions: Learn about four new jobs. Pick and circle one job from each category. Once you've selected the jobs, visit the **Encourage** app or onetonline.org to learn about each job's salary and responsibilities.

High School Diploma

- Sales Representative
- Customer Service Representative
- Office Clerk
- Food Service Manager
- Travel Guide
- Bill & Account Collectors

Salary: _____

Responsibilities: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Certificate/Associate's Degree

- Wholesale and Retail Buyer
- Loan Interviewers
- Travel Agent
- Human Resource Assistant
- Customs Brokers
- Tax Preparers

Salary: _____

Responsibilities: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Bachelor's Degree

- Public Relations Specialist
- Lodging Managers
- Supply Chain Manager
- Buyers & Purchasing Agents
- Sales Managers
- Accountant
- Marketing Manager

Salary: _____

Responsibilities: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Advanced Degree

- Corporate Sustainability Officer
- Chief Executive
- Investment Fund Manager
- Financial Quantitative Analyst
- Operations Research Analyst
- Economist

Salary: _____

Responsibilities: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In the App

GRADES 7-10

Use **My Careers** to explore part-time work.

Ask students to think about the process of applying for a job.

Discuss as a class:
Has anyone had a job interview?
How can you prepare for an interview?

Student Directions:
Log in to **Encourage.**

Web: Click **My Careers.** Use the search bar.
Mobile App: Click **Explore**, click **My Careers,** and then use the search bar. Search for the following jobs to learn more about their responsibilities: waiter/waitress, cashier, lifeguard, and barista.

Write down questions you think you might be asked in a job interview for each job.

GRADES 11-12

Use **My Majors** to research careers.

Ask students to connect possible majors to future careers.

Discuss as a class:
How are majors and jobs related?
How can you consider a major before a job? OR a job before a major?

Student Directions:
Log in to **Encourage.**
Click **My Majors.**
Toggle to the **Matched** tab.
(Take the quiz if you haven't.)
Click on a matched major area.
Click a specific major in that area.
Toggle to the **Careers** tab.
Explore a matched career.

GRADES 7-10

Use **My Careers** to explore part-time work.

Ask students to make a chart of possible jobs they could get as high school students, then research each job using the **Encourage** app.

Discuss as a class:
What are some pros and cons of working at your age?

Student Directions:
Log in to **Encourage.**

Web: Click **My Careers**. Use the search bar.
Mobile App: Click **Explore**, click **My Careers**, and use the search bar. Search for the following jobs to learn more about them: receptionist, retail salesperson, & food preparation worker.

GRADES 11-12

Use **My Careers** to discover **Cool Careers**.

Assign students to learn more about cool careers that populate each week in **My Careers**.

Discuss as a class:
What job did you learn about this week?
What thoughts did you have about it?

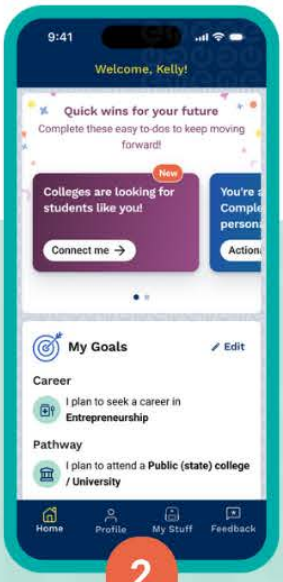
Student Directions:
Log in to **Encourage.**
Click **My Careers**.
Scroll down to **Cool Careers.**
Click on each of the three highlighted careers to learn more and discover similar careers.

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Quick Start Guide

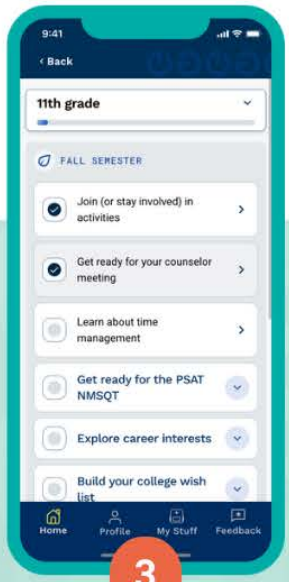
1 Create Your Encourage Account

Use the QR code to create your **Encourage** account on your favorite device. You can also search for **"Encourage"** in the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.



2

Take 10-15 minutes to complete your profile, set your preferences, and identify your goals.



3

Review tasks and learn how to take control of your journey.



4

Check out **Explore** to discover colleges, majors, careers, and scholarships and start planning for life after high school.

5 Lean on Your Champions for Support

Talk to your champions—parents, guardians, mentors, teachers, or school counselors—and ask for help and support on your college journey. Get more advice and resources at **encourageme.com**.



Let's get social:

@encourage_app

@encourage_app

Interview

Directions: Interview an adult in your life whose career you don't know much about using the questions below.

Interviewee:

What is your job title ?

What do you do day to day?

What was your educational path to this job?

What career advice do you have for me?

Our Learning Outcomes

We map our in-app and communications content to the following learning outcomes developed from a national audit on best practices related to college, career, and life readiness.

Academic Success Skills

Career Planning

Collaboration

College Planning

Critical Thinking

Cultural Competence

Curiosity

Financial Literacy

Goal Setting

Leadership

Professional Skills

Resilience

Self-reflection

Social-emotional Learning

Transition

Work Ethic



Research & Resources

Resources and Inspiration

The following resources guided these lesson:

Annual Review of Psychology
https://www.annualreviews.org/content/journals/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115137

ASCA Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success
https://www.schoolcounselor.org/getmedia/7428a787-a452-4abb-afec-d78ec77870cd/Mindsets-Behaviors.pdf

Association for Psychological Science
https://www.healthandhumanperformancelab.com/_files/ugd/b30fc8_53e1f971c6164c50af2b1ccf27d9eb68.pdf

Bright Horizons: Time Management Tips Based on Personality Type
https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Blog/personality-types-time-management-tips

Character Lab
https://characterlab.org/tips-of-the-week/good-enough/

Connections Academy: Time Management Personality Quiz for Students
https://www.connectionsacademy.com/support/resources/article/what-s-your-style-4-time-management-personality-types/#:~:text=There%20are%20different%20time%2Dmanagement,strategies%20that%20work%20for%20you.

Entrepreneur: 12 Things Every "Type A" Person Wants You to Know
https://www.entrepreneur.com/living/12-things-every-type-a-person-wants-you-to-know/299922#11'

Inside Higher Ed: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/life-after-college/2024/01/19/survey-students-career-influences-and-desired

National Center for O*NET Development
https://www.onetonline.org/

Psychology Today:
https://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com/bin/transfer

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Research & Resources