

Teacher Guide: My Journey Chats for Middle and High School Classrooms

This weekly series of virtual discussions is designed to give students an opportunity to hear directly from professionals and to expose students to pathways available to them with a strong foundation in computer science. Discussions are structured as informal Q&As lasting 30 minutes. Topics include:

- How the speaker came to be where they are today, including other career paths they considered and obstacles they faced
- Descriptions of the speaker’s work and the role that computer science plays
- The role that mentors, professional connections, and support networks have played in their career journeys

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Student Takeaways / Guiding Principles

- **I am in charge of my own journey.** Students “view themselves as their own best change agents.” [Research](#) demonstrates that students “see themselves as experts on their own lives, needs, aspirations, struggles, and worldview” and “feel optimistic about their future and see themselves as capable of reaching their goals.” My Journey Chats for middle and high school classrooms affirm students’ sense of personal agency by highlighting specific experiences from the career journeys of diverse professionals.
- **My unique identity, as an individual, as a member of my community, and as a member of my racial, ethnic, gender, disability, socioeconomic, and/or cultural group, is an asset that helps me offer something unique and important and can contribute to my success.** While students expect to face barriers to success based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, geography, and/or socioeconomic status, they also believe their own unique identities will contribute to their success, although they may have difficulty coming up with specifics. This strength-based framing will be confirmed, and students encouraged to explicitly think about their own strengths.



- **Career exploration is often iterative, moving among three different stages: Exposure, Exploration, and Selection.** These are the three primary stages of occupational identity formation. They are often not linear but *iterative*: students move among them as they “learn more about themselves and gain work and life experience.”
 - Exposure: Who I know, what I see, and what/who I have access to
 - Exploration: Trying on different aspects of career and work
 - Selection: Determining the first steps of a chosen career pathway
- **A good life is the goal, and a good career is one critical element to reaching that goal.** “A satisfying career is part of what constitutes a good life, which also includes having health, wealth, stability, and control over their lives. It means being part of a family, including being a parent if they choose, socially well-connected, and engaged and giving back to their community.” ([source](#))
- **‘Who you know’ is important:** Understanding who is in my support network, how to access the supports I need, and how to make new career connections is critical to my journey. Students often understand and value support and connections, but may not know how to access them. My Journey Chats highlights specific instances of building connections and accessing support to advance career journeys.
- **How I perceive my progress will move through three different stages: Surviving, Striving, and Thriving, and understanding which stage I’m in can help me overcome or avoid potential obstacles.** Survive-Strive-Thrive is a framework articulated by students themselves in [a wide-ranging study conducted by Equitable Futures](#).
 - Surviving: I’m living paycheck to paycheck—or have no job—and feel that I’m struggling to make ends meet.
 - Striving: I feel that I have goals and am following steps that will help me advance toward thriving.
 - Thriving: I feel that I have achieved my goals and attained my personal version of a good life.



Before the My Journey Chat

Give students time in class to explore career pathways. Here are a few suggestions for doing so:

- In groups or on their own, have students watch our short [“Careers in Tech” video profiles](#). Take a look at the [Viewing Guide](#) for tips and a worksheet students can use to guide reflection and discussion.
- Give students some time to [explore different career paths](#), using interactive tools like RoadTrip Nation’s The Roadmap or The Interest Profiler from O*Net. As students are exploring, encourage them to think about how computer science connects to their other interests.
- Encourage students to [explore forums like CareerVillage.org or College Confidential](#), where they can see questions posted by other students, and ask questions themselves. *(Note that students will need to create an account.)*

In each of these instances, you should take a few moments before getting started to explain how the activity will work and why students are doing it.

Have students map out their own desired career pathways. We recommend using [this lesson plan & worksheet](#) from the Striving to Thriving project.

- Collect any questions that arise that may be applicable to the My Journey Chat. If there’s time, we’ll open up for Q&A.

Plan out how your class will participate in the My Journey Chat. Will you use one large screen to view, or will students participate on their own devices, individually or in groups? Will you designate a student to post questions that come up into the Q&A, or will you do it yourself? *Note that these events will take place over Zoom Webinar, and any questions you post will only be visible to the panelists.*

Explain to your students why they’re participating and how the Chat will work.

Tell them the speaker is a professional who uses computer science in their career, and they’ll be talking about what their work is and how they came to it. Explain that the speaker’s career represents one possible journey available to students with a strong foundation in computer science.

Ensure the device(s) you will use are working properly and your internet connection is strong enough to livestream a Zoom webinar. Also, make sure you have the link to join, and that your volume is at an appropriate level. If you have students who are deaf or hard of hearing, make sure closed captioning is turned on.



After the My Journey Chat

Make time for reflection and discussion. Ask students:

- What stood out to you about the speaker's career journey?
- What did you find surprising?
- What did you find interesting or exciting?
- What are two things you learned from listening to the speaker?
- What questions do you still have?

Record their responses somewhere the whole class can see.

If you had students map out their desired pathways before the Chat, have them return to the activity. Would they change anything based on what they heard? If so, what would they change, and why?

If students did NOT map out their desired pathways before the Chat, then now is a great time to have them try it. Again, we recommend using [this lesson plan & worksheet](#) from the Striving to Thriving project.

Give students some time to brainstorm their strengths. Have them work individually, writing at least 3 strengths down using a paper and pen or pencil. Encourage students to share in small groups or as a class. Ask them: How can their strengths help them on their career journeys?

Go further: Suggestions for extended learning

View more video profiles. Take a look at our [Career Exploration hub](#) for more resources to use for career exploration in the classroom.

Participate in or watch another My Journey Chat. Check out some of the other 6-12 [chats from the past](#) or watch for upcoming chats for 6-12 classrooms. Recordings will be available for all.

Organize in-person (if safe to do so) talks with local professionals. In-person talks, especially with local professionals who reflect the diversity of your classroom, are incredibly impactful for students. Reach out to parents, local businesses, and other community members.



Point students to opportunities outside of the classroom. For both middle and high school students, we've curated [a collection of extracurricular opportunities](#) like coding clubs, hackathons, and summer camps. Just for high school students, we've curated [a list of professional organizations](#) that offer mentorship and networking opportunities to students.

Frequently Asked Questions

The time and/or date of the live event does not work for my class. Will a recording be available?

Yes! A recording will be made available on the [Career Chats recordings page](#) a day or two after each Chat.

How were the student takeaways/guiding principles developed?

Student takeaways and guiding principles were deeply informed by [Striving to Thriving research](#) conducted as part of the [Equitable Futures](#) project. Other sources that informed our thinking on career discussions for middle and high school students include Microsoft's [Closing the STEM Gap](#) report, the [Guide to Inclusive Computer Science Education](#), and Kapor Center's recently released [Framework for Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Computer Science Education](#).

What should I do if I lose or never receive a link to join the webinar?

Please contact us at csjourneys@code.org.

Who can I reach out to if I have questions or issues?

Feel free to reach out to us at csjourneys@code.org. We will do our best to respond promptly.

