

Host a Career Fair: Karns Middle School

Hosting a career fair is an excellent way to encourage students to begin to think about their futures as well as to get the community involved in your school. Planning a career fair can seem like a big undertaking—but the benefits for students are immeasurable. On the following pages, we've provided a career fair planning timeline and checklist based on the planning resources used at Karns Middle School to assist you with planning your event.

Career Fair Planning: Timeline and Checklist

6 Months Before Your Event:

-Convene a career fair planning team to assist with planning your event. This team could include counselors, teachers, administration, parents, and/or community members. Consider also including students in some of your planning meetings. They will be able to give you great insights on careers their classmates are interested in and could help you to promote and build excitement about the event.

-As early in the school year as possible, provide an interest inventory to your students. This will allow you to try to recruit the jobs/careers that are of interest to many of your students, increasing the relevancy of the Career Fair to the intended audience.

-Schedule a time, date, and location for your event. You will need a large space—many schools use their gym, cafeteria, or auditorium.

-Finalize the format and structure for your event and make sure you have access to all of the necessary materials. Make sure to consider the following questions:

- oHow will students participate in the event? Will they be able to come during the school day? When? Will students be able to attend the career fair that day during a certain class period? Will all grade levels participate?
- oHow will career representatives set up in your space? Will they each have their own table or will they need to share? Will you provide chairs for your representatives?
- o Who is invited to your event? Are you only inviting students or will you also invite parents to attend the fair?

3-6 Months Before Your Event

-With your planning team, brainstorm a list of the careers you would like to see represented at your fair and determine what companies or organizations in your community might be able to represent that career. Use your social networks and those of your planning team to find contact persons in the careers on your list.

-Reach out to the individuals and/or companies you have identified to solicit their participation in the career fair. As you receive positive responses, it is helpful to keep track of the representative's name, company/career, and contact information. You will need this to follow up before the event. Some recruitment ideas include:

- o Reaching out to parents. They frequently enjoy participating at the school their student attends.
- o Allowing students to participate in meetings and directly recruit.

- o Use your social networks and those of your planning team to find contact persons in the careers on your list.
- o Addressing community business groups about the importance of the Career Fair.

-Consider offering an incentive for career representatives to participate. Karns Middle School hosts their career fair in the morning and offers lunch afterwards for all participants.

1 Month Before Your Event

-Contact all confirmed participants with the event details. Make sure to collect any information from participants about their space needs. Specifically, ask if they will need to be in close proximity to an outlet or if they require a certain amount of space for any exhibits they are bringing. Clearly outline to participants what you will be providing and what they will be responsible for. Encourage them to make their booth as interactive as possible. For example, firefighters may bring their suits to try on, beauticians may offer a few makeovers, newscasters may bring their cameras or microphones, etc.

-Begin promoting your event to both students and parents (if included in the event). Include information about the event in morning announcements. Encourage teachers to discuss careers in their classrooms.

-Allow students the opportunity to complete career inventories on www.CollegeforTN.org so that they can target representatives from those careers during the career fair.

-Consider ways to increase student engagement during the fair. At Karns Middle School, representatives were given raffle tickets. When students asked particularly thoughtful questions about their career, they wrote the student's name on the ticket. At the end of the day, tickets were drawn for students to receive donated prizes.

-Create a layout for your space. Using the list of confirmed presenters and the information you gathered about their space needs, begin to assign career representatives to tables/locations.

-Create a student interview form. Students should interview at least one of the participants about their job or career. In order to create some accountability, teachers can grade these interviews (for completion only).

-Make sure students are asked to talk to higher education representatives (high school or college representatives). One important aspect of the Career Fair is to connect careers with education. This aspect can be added to the student interview form.

-Invite the media to attend the Fair. Local papers and/or television representatives enjoy reporting on community and school events.

Week of the Event

-Follow up with your career representatives and remind them of any last minute details.

-Review event logistics with all school staff. This is especially important if students will be

rotating through the fair during class periods.

-Create a list or brochure of all career representatives that have confirmed their attendance for the fair. Distribute the brochure to students in advance.

-Prepare students for the event. Encourage teachers to discuss the fair with their students during their advisory/enrichment periods. Students can plan which booths they would like to visit and can also brainstorm a list of questions for the representatives.

-Finalize your space layout and print several copies. You may choose to display the layout at the event so both representatives and students can find their assigned tables.

-Assign members from your planning team and volunteers from your school community with tasks for the day of the event. It will be important to have volunteers assigned to the following tasks:

- oTraffic Direction- Make sure you have several volunteers outside the school to show career representatives where they can park and direct them to the location of the career fair.

- oCheck In Table- Set up a check-in table for career representatives to sign in (which may be your school policy) and to tell representatives the location of their booth.

- oStudent Helpers- Assign students from your planning team to help on the day of the event. Students can be extremely helpful with showing representatives to their tables and/or with helping representatives unload any supplies.

- o Staff Helpers- On the day of the event, it will be impossible for you to help everyone and answer all of their questions. At Karns Middle School, staff helpers were given a balloon to carry around that allowed you to easily spot them in the crowded auditorium and representatives were told to seek out these staff members if they had questions.

- o Water and/or Snack Distributer- If your event will be over the course of many hours, it is a nice gesture to your representatives to provide them with water and/or a snack. Solicit the help of students and/or staff to distribute these.

Day of the Event

-Double check your space layout and print extra copies. Make sure your helpers and your check in table volunteers have copies of the layouts to be able to direct representatives. Consider posting a large copy of the layout for all to see.

-Ensure that your tables and chairs are set up correctly.

-Print signs for your tables. Include the representative's name and company/career and place the sign on their assigned table.

-Meet with your volunteers before the event starts to make sure they are comfortable with their role for the day.

- Set up your check-in table—make sure that your representative sign in system is ready to go!
- Add important “day of” information to the morning announcements.

After the Event:

- Thank your volunteers and participants. Consider sending handwritten notes from students or thank you emails.
- Meet with your career fair planning team to debrief the event. Discuss what went well and what could be improved for next year’s fair. Consider distributing a survey to representatives to get their feedback about the experience.
- Send evaluation forms to students and to teachers. Their feedback is essential to next year’s planning!

Sample Career Fair Layout

