

Teacher Guide: My Journey Chats for K-5 Classrooms

This weekly series of virtual discussions is designed to give students an opportunity to hear directly from professionals and to expose students to a variety of careers that computer science connects to. Discussions are structured as informal Q&As lasting 20 minutes.

Topics include:

- Career descriptions and how they contribute to the speaker's community
- What a typical day is like at the speaker's job, and how they use computer science
- The skills and abilities their work requires
- The speaker's career journey: how they decided on their career and how they got there
- The people in their life who helped them on their journey

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Student Takeaways / Guiding Principles

- **Computer science and technology careers are for everybody, not just for a certain kind of person. I shouldn't limit myself based on my gender, race, ethnicity, disability, geography, or socioeconomic status.** Research indicates that [students as young as 6 or 7 are self-selecting out of certain careers](#) based on stereotypes around race, ethnicity, gender, and/or socioeconomic status. Exposing students to more, and more diverse, models, can help to counter these stereotypes and broaden student aspirations.
- **Dreaming is good, and dreams often change.** Children imagine themselves into many different futures. At this stage in their career exploration, it's important to broaden aspirations and encourage dreaming.



- **My career contributes to my community.** It's important for younger students to understand how different kinds of jobs contribute to the wellbeing of their communities.
- **My career is a story that I'm telling about myself.** "Career development is not just about jobs, work and careers, rather it is about life stories. Children actively explore their worlds and begin to construct possibilities for present and future selves. These life stories include a sense of self (self-identity), life roles, skills and knowledge, and are shaped by everyday events and experiences, as well as by interests, attitudes, beliefs, and role models." ([source](#))
- **The people around me—my family, my teachers, and others I know—can help me explore what I want to do.** Adults and peers in students' immediate environments influence self-identity. In some ways, they are "co-authors" of the student's career story. Healthy relationships help students build confidence in themselves and trust in others, and support career exploration.
- **Computer science careers require lots of creativity and the ability to identify and solve problems. These are important skills/abilities that I'm learning in my own computer science class.** Career chats help bring learning to life for students, demonstrating real-life relevance to what they're learning in the classroom.

Before the My Journey Chat

Give students time in class to explore careers and imagine different futures for themselves. Here are a few suggestions for doing so:

- **Create your 'future self' avatar in Sprite Lab.** Have students create their own future selves in [Sprite Lab](#). Encourage them to program a short scene from a 'day in the life' of their grown-up self. (Ages 10+)
- **Career Vision Boards.** Students use poster board or [Sprite Lab](#) to create a career vision board, a collage of their hopes and expectations for when they grow up. Collages can include drawings, words and pictures. (*Poster board version appropriate for pre-readers and up. Sprite Lab version appropriate for ages 9+*)
- **O*Net Career Exploration tool.** Give students time to explore different careers using [O*Net](#). Note that O*Net contains hundreds of careers that can be searched for in a number of ways. Make sure you familiarize yourself with the tool and decide the most appropriate way for your students to use it. (Ages 9+)

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.

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? How will you capture any questions that come up? *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 did you find interesting or exciting?
- What are two things you learned from listening to the speaker?
- What questions do you still have?

Give students additional time to imagine futures for themselves. Use one of the suggested activities in the "Before My Journey Chat" section above, or have them write a story or draw a picture about one or some of the things they want to do when they grow up.

Go further: Suggestions for extended learning

View the career exploration page for more ideas. We've put together a number of research-informed suggestions for [exploring computer science careers with younger students](#).

Participate in or watch another My Journey Chat. Check out some of the other K-5 chats from the past or watch for upcoming chats for K-5 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.

Make parents aware of opportunities outside of the classroom. Extracurricular activities and programs like hackathons and coding clubs reinforce classroom learning and are often powerful motivators for students, especially young women. Encourage parents to get their children involved with one or more of the opportunities on the [career exploration page](#).

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 My Journey Chats landing 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 two recent reports: [Starting Early: Building the Foundations for Success](#) and [The Early Years: Career Development for Young Children](#). Other sources that informed our thinking on career discussions for elementary 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.

