

LEARNING EXPERIENCE BRIEF

JA Inspire[®] (Middle School)

■ Work and Career Readiness

JA Inspire is much more than a career fair. It brings together the business community and local schools and is designed to help launch middle school students into their future—high school, postsecondary education, and careers beyond. The curriculum can be completed by students independently at home, or in a classroom with or without teacher involvement. The *JA Inspire* event, which follows the curriculum, can be in-person, virtual, or both.

The learning experience consists of three segments: (1) pre-event career-oriented sessions; (2) the *JA Inspire* event; and (3) a post-event reflection. The *JA Inspire* event is aligned with local industry and career opportunities, as well as JA Area and local school district preferences.

JA Inspire in-person events are multi-hour experiences where students participate in hands-on activities, often using equipment or tools used on a job. VFairs, the online interactive platform used to host *JA Inspire* virtual events, allows students to attend webinars and presentations, explore company exhibits, and interact with career speakers. Both event types provide students a powerful way to learn about real-world career opportunities and their local economy.

This learning experience is part of the JA Work and Career Readiness Pathway and is designed for grades 6–8. The default instructional contact hours for this learning experience is 4 hours, with a variable ICH of 5–6 hours.



LEARNING EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- Is a fully online, self-guided curriculum with a teacher-led option that allows students to explore their own values, skills, and interests, plus career clusters and the specific jobs that align with them.
- Offers optional wraparound classroom introductions and talking points for each session.
- Requires a digital device for each participating student.
- Event (virtual, in-person, or both) provides a powerful way to learn about real-world careers.
- Provides many extension activities via JA Connect (connect.ja.org/work-career-readiness)

JA Inspire (Middle School)

VFAIRS PLATFORM DETAILS

- Is accessible from any device.
- No downloads are required.
- Visually rich virtual environment mimics the dynamics of a physical live event, including a virtual lobby, information desk, auditorium for presentations, and exhibit halls with sponsoring company booths.
- Students can revisit the virtual career fair multiple times following the live event.
- Materials can be saved to a virtual backpack and emailed to students or to parents post event.

JA INSPIRE CURRICULUM

The *JA Inspire Virtual* self-guided curriculum's implementation is flexible, based on educator and JA Area preferences. Teachers can introduce and follow up activities using the optional wraparound session guides, or students can complete lessons independently at home or in the classroom. Downloadable, fillable PDF student activity pages, videos, and links to websites are accessed through the digital student guidebook. Self-guided extended learning resources are identified.

1 Session One: Career Interests and Your Path

Students understand the importance of career planning and complete a Career Interest Inventory to assess their own values, skills, and interests in the context of career paths.

2 Session Two: Career Planning and Your Path

Using JA Here to Career at <https://career.ja.org> (formerly JA Digital Career Book), students learn to recognize career clusters and focus on those tied to the results of their Career Interest Inventory. They explore the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for their careers of interest, as well as the outlook for openings in those fields.

3 Session Three: Preparing to Meet Your Future

Students learn how awareness of their values, skills, and interests helps guide them to a career that is meaningful, enjoyable, and positioned for success. They learn about soft skills and explore education and training requirements in their fields of interest.

JA Inspire (Middle School)

4 Session Four: Local Business Means Opportunity

Students learn about their local economy. They review the list of *JA Inspire* exhibitors and the website of their local Chamber of Commerce and look for common themes, such as career clusters. They identify companies they would like to visit during the *JA Inspire* event.

5 Session Five: Learn from the Experts

Students review the speakers and webinars at the *JA Inspire* virtual career fair, create a list of at least three to view, and define what they would like to learn from them.

Optional Session: Preparing for the JA Inspire In-Person Event

[For in-person only events, replace Session Five with this session. For hybrid events, add this session after Session Five.]

Students prepare for the in-person *JA Inspire* event by reviewing logistics of the event day and getting ready to make a good first impression when interacting with company representatives.

6 Session Six: Visit the JA Inspire Career Fair

Students attend the *JA Inspire* event. This may be a virtual event on the vFairs platform, an in-person event, or both.

7 Session Seven: JA Inspire Personal Reflection

Students reflect on what they have learned and identify next steps to further define their academic choices and career path.