

Building Credentials

The **BIG** Idea

- What do my high school activities tell college admissions officers/ employers about me?

AGENDA

Approx. 45 minutes

- I. Warm Up: Before They Were Famous (10 minutes)
- II. Standing Out (10 minutes)
- III. You're Hired! (15 minutes)
- IV. Wrap Up: Building Credentials Now (10 minutes)

MATERIALS

- PORTFOLIO PAGES:**
 - Portfolio page 28, Certificate of Participation
- STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
 - Student Handbook page 76, You're Hired!
 - Student Handbook page 77, Tips for Building Credentials
 - Student Handbook page 78, Activities Checklist
- FACILITATOR PAGES:**
 - Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW
 - Facilitator Resource 2, Before They Were Famous, (optional copy for each student following the game)
- Credentials reference guide (See **Preparation**)
- Celebrity photographs for warm up activity, with tape for posting

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Know that early work experiences, including volunteerism and extracurricular activities, give access to later opportunities (including careers and college).
- Realize that employers hiring for entry-level jobs may rely on volunteer work and extracurricular activities to distinguish between candidates.
- Begin a record of his/her credentials (academic, extracurricular, volunteering).

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea of building credentials as a way to show who they are and what they can do – with both future employers and college admissions officers in mind. As a warm up, they guess which celebrities held which first (or early) jobs. (Who knew that LL Cool J once had a paper route, or that Brad Pitt dressed in a chicken costume to attract customers to a fast-food restaurant?) Students discuss what employers are looking for, and use a checklist to identify past activities that qualify as “credentials.” Next, they examine the credentials of three high-school students and determine who they’d hire to work at an ice cream shop. Finally, they begin a credentials file of their own by bringing in evidence of their own extracurricular activities.

PREPARATION

- List the day’s **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- Write the day’s vocabulary words and definitions on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Student Handbook page 77, Tips for Building Credentials**
 - **Facilitator Resource 2, Before They Were Famous**
- Gather photos of five of the celebrities listed in **Facilitator Resource 2, Before They Were Famous**. These photos can be easily printed from the Internet, or photocopied from books or magazines at the library. (NOTE: If you happen to know about the early jobs of those celebrities who are popular with students in your area, feel free to substitute other celebrities for those listed below. Also, please make sure to include celebrities that are diverse demographically – both males and females, various races.)
- Create a reference guide to local volunteer and work opportunities as well as after-school activities so that you can offer students concrete suggestions for building credentials.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

It's important for students to realize that the activities they participate in today can be assets when they apply for their first jobs in a year or two.

VOCABULARY

Entry-level Job: A job requiring little or no experience.

Credentials: Qualifications; evidence that a person can handle a particular task.

Reference: A person who can recommend you for a job based on what they know about your character or work habits.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

DO NOW:

*(You may choose to present the Warm Up activity as a written Do Now. Present the questions on the board or overhead, and have students write only their answers on index cards. You could also choose to give the students a handout by copying **Facilitator Resource 1, DO NOW.**)*

Directions: *How did they get their start? Match the name of each celebrity with his early job.*

Celebrity

1. _____ Madonna
2. _____ Chris Rock
3. _____ Brad Pitt
4. _____ Garth Brooks
5. _____ Jennifer Aniston

Early Job

- a. Boot salesman
- b. Worked at a Red Lobster restaurant
- c. Dunkin' Donuts counterperson
- d. Waitress
- e. Dressed in a chicken costume for a fast food restaurant

[After they have completed their answers, begin with the **Warm Up** as written. You may wish to use photos of the celebrities listed here for the **Warm Up** activity.]

Once you've finished playing the game, you may wish to distribute copies of **Facilitator Re-**

source 2, Before They Were Famous, for students to share with their families and friends.

For **Activity III, You're Hired!**, you might want to have students form small groups to consider the "You're Hired!" applicants, explaining their choices in a whole-class discussion afterward.

In **Activity IV, Wrap Up: Building Credentials Now**, you may choose the following adaptations for **Student Handbook page 77, Tips for Building Credentials**:

- Assign students to small groups. Each small group is responsible for reading one of the three sections and reporting their findings to the class.
- Give each student a highlighter and ask him/her to highlight three tips or sentences that he/she finds interesting or relevant.
- Students can create an action plan where they write down two concrete steps they plan to take to build their credentials. This can be written on an index card and collected at the end of class.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up: Before They Were Famous (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, we talked about academic entrance requirements for college. This week, we'll talk about ways you can demonstrate to colleges and employers that you're a responsible and capable person.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Everyone has to start somewhere. Your first job may be far from your final career goal. But your first job often helps convince your next employer that you're a good worker and someone worth hiring. If your first job is related to your career goal, that's even better.

How many of you dream about being famous one day?

[Many hands will go up.]

Well, you're in luck. It's time to play "Before They Were Famous." It's a game in which you try to figure out the first jobs of some well-known people.

[One at a time, hold up each celebrity's picture and ask students to identify who the person is — and his/her claim to fame. Once the celebrity is correctly identified, tape his/her photo to the wall.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** None of these stars started off in the big time. When they were younger, they all began with much less glamorous jobs that certainly didn't come with huge paychecks. For example, one of these famous people once worked behind the counter at Dunkin' Donuts. Which celebrity was it?

[Point to each of the celebrity photos and ask students to raise their hands if they think the celebrity was the person who worked behind the counter at Dunkin' Donuts. After tallying the votes, and announcing the results, tell the group that Madonna was a former Dunkin' Donuts counter person.]

3. [List the remaining first jobs on the board and repeat the voting process for the other four celebrities you selected. NOTE: Make sure to list the jobs out of order to make this game more challenging.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Did you find any of these first jobs surprising? Do you happen to know about the first jobs of other celebrities?

[Encourage brief discussion.]

Next, we'll take a look at some of the things people do to get their first jobs.

II. Standing Out (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Many **entry-level jobs** – like the ones at [store names in your area- e.g. McDonald's, the Gap, or a drug store] require you to fill out a job application form. These forms always include a “work experience” section and a “reference” section.
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** So, what do you do if you don't have any work experience? Are you sunk? Or are there still ways you could impress a potential employer? [Allow students to respond.]

Don't worry, even if you have never held a job, you can still start gathering credentials. One of the best parts of an entry-level job is that an employer will usually teach you the specific skills needed to do the job. A McDonald's supervisor, for example, doesn't assume that you know how to ring up an order. Learning how to operate machinery such as a cash register, a cappuccino machine, or a price-tag gun doesn't take much time.

[If you feel comfortable, you may wish to discuss your first job experience. You can discuss what skills and behaviors you needed to demonstrate to get that job and how that experience better prepared you for future jobs/school.]

So, what are employers REALLY looking for when they hire new employees?

[Allow a brief discussion, adding the following examples if students don't come up with them on their own:

- Will you show up on time?
- Do you look presentable and friendly?
- Do you get along well with others?
- Can you be trusted with handling the business's money?
- Are you a hard worker?
- Can you act professionally and responsibly?
- How good are you at solving problems that come up?]

3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Employers will want you to provide evidence that you've

demonstrated these behaviors and skills before. This evidence is known as your credentials. Credentials are proof that you've already demonstrated the kinds of skills and behaviors that ALL employers are looking for in the people they hire — working hard, learning quickly, being trustworthy, cooperating with others, showing up on time, and so on.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Employers aren't the only ones impressed with credentials. If you are interested in applying to college, you will be asked many of the same questions about your experiences and interests.

[Refer students to **Student Handbook page 78, Activities Checklist**. Explain that this list includes a range of activities that can demonstrate responsibility and teamwork to both employers and colleges. Ask them to check all that apply to their lives and add any others that aren't already listed.]

III. You're Hired! (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** It's time to play a game called "You're Hired." In this game, you are going to pretend that you are an employer.

Let's imagine it's springtime, and you are the manager of the "I Scream for Ice Cream" ice cream shop. You're getting ready for the summer crowds by hiring some teens to work the counter. In July and August your store is wildly popular, with more than 200 customers an hour! You're looking for someone who can get along well with lots of different kinds of people, works quickly and efficiently, has good organizational skills, shows up on time, and can even cool off people's tempers when the lines wind around the block.

You have just interviewed three possible candidates for the job: Will, Sandra, and Ian. Let's look at their credentials together.

2. [Refer students to **Student Handbook page 76, You're Hired!** and lead a group discussion about each of the candidates.]

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: Will, Sandra, and Ian have a lot going for them. During middle school and the first two years of high school, they were very busy building their credentials. This makes them very appealing to employers.

Do you think Will would be a strong candidate to choose for a job behind the ice cream

counter? Why or why not? Which of his credentials might make him a good scooper at your store? What do the kinds of activities that Will has chosen tell you about him?

[Allow an open-ended discussion. Encourage students to refer to Will's specific credentials. Review Sandra and Ian's credentials in the same way. Have the students take a vote on which of the three candidates — Will, Sandra, or Ian — they would hire if they were the manager of the ice cream shop. Ask what jobs the candidates who aren't chosen might be better suited for.]

IV. Wrap Up: Building Credentials Now (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Some of you might be wondering how you can build your own credentials. Please turn to **Student Handbook page 77, Tips for Building Credentials**, for some ideas about how to get started.

[Review suggestions with the students.]

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** For next week, I'd like you to start building your own credentials file. Please bring a document that gives evidence of something you've done this year that contributes to your school or community.

Look back at **Student Handbook page 78, Activities Checklist**, for ideas about what to bring in. It could be the program from a play, a team photo, or a note from an adult in a program where you volunteer.

Please turn to **Portfolio page 30, Certificate of Participation**, for a form that an adult sponsor or coach can use to certify your participation. If you use this form, you can make the adult's job easier by filling in all the blanks except for their signature and contact information at the bottom of the page.

[Remind students of the reward you've designated for completed homework.]

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DO NOW

Education After High School 4: Building Credentials

Directions: How did they get their start? Match the name of each celebrity with his or her early job.

Celebrity	Early Job
1. _____ Madonna	a. Boot salesman
2. _____ Chris Rock	b. Worked at a Red Lobster restaurant
3. _____ Brad Pitt	c. Dunkin' Donuts counterperson
4. _____ Garth Brooks	d. Waitress
5. _____ Jennifer Aniston	e. Dressed in a chicken costume for a fast food restaurant



Before They Were Famous

Celebrity	Early Job
Madonna, singer	Dunkin' Donuts counterperson
Jerry Seinfeld, comedian	Sold light bulbs over the phone
Oprah Winfrey, talk show host	Worked at a Nashville radio station while in high school
David Letterman, talk show host	Checkout bagger at local supermarket
LL Cool J, singer	Delivered newspapers by bicycle
Chris Rock, comedian	Worked at a Red Lobster restaurant
Jennifer Aniston, actress	Waitress
Garth Brooks, singer	Boot salesman
Dennis Rodman, basketball player	Camp counselor
Avril Lavigne, singer	Mowed neighbors' lawns at age 12
Nelly, singer	Unloaded trucks for UPS
John Mayer, singer	Gas station attendant
Tommy Hilfiger, designer	Sold clothes from the trunk of his car; also a lifeguard
Johnny Depp, actor	Sold pens by phone
Taye Diggs, actor	Worked at a pizza place in NYC
Jack Nicholson, actor	Lifeguard and theater usher
Sammy Sosa, baseball player	Sold orange juice and shined shoes
Ellen Degeneris, talk show host	Shucked oysters and sold vacuums
Michael Dell, CEO Dell comp.	Dishwasher at Chinese restaurant
Stephen King, novelist	School janitor
Bill Murray, actor	Sold chestnuts outside a grocery store
Robin Williams, comedian/actor	Street mime
Brad Pitt, actor	Moved refrigerators; dressed in a chicken costume for a fast-food restaurant



You're Hired!

Imagine that you are the manager of the local ice cream shop. Which of these three job applicants would you hire? Why? Write your answers below.

WILL, AGE 16

- Worked as babysitter for a family in the neighborhood
- Volunteers for Meals on Wheels (delivers meals to people who are unable to leave their home)
- Friends say he's an "organization freak" and he loves to help his friends organize their lockers and bedrooms
- Helped tutor younger kids in math at a local after-school program

SANDRA, AGE 16

- Volunteered at local hospital once/week with church group, helps bring around dogs to cheer up patients
- Writes movie reviews and articles for the school newspaper
- Acts in school musicals
- Enjoys helping her dad cook meals for her whole family (that's 10 people in all)
- Worked as a junior counselor at the camp she went to as a kid

IAN, AGE 16

- Loves gaming, and has mastered all the levels of Madden NFL
- Known in his school for having a great sense of humor
- Draws cartoons for the school yearbook
- Can figure out any techno gadget with little effort

Your Recommendations:

Who gets the job?

I would hire _____ because _____

_____.

What jobs would you suggest for the other two applicants?

I think _____ would be good at _____
because _____
_____.

I think _____ would be good at _____
because _____
_____.

Tips for Building Credentials

Keep track.

- Start to keep a Credentials Notebook. Make a list of all the names and phone numbers of anyone you've worked for, even if it's babysitting or shoveling snow. This becomes your list of "satisfied customers" who can become references later on.
- In your Credentials Notebook, write down any sports or after-school clubs that you participate in, and what skills, talents, or knowledge you've learned from them. Your coach or advisor is a good person to recommend you for future work.
- Don't try to do everything at once. Being an expert in one area, such as computers or theater, can be as valuable as knowing a little about a lot of things.

Volunteer some time.

- To get ideas of where to volunteer, figure out the kinds of activities you like best. Do you prefer working with older people or younger people? Outdoors or inside? In groups or alone? Do you like office work or physical labor? And so on.
- Don't be afraid to try something outside your usual interests. Volunteering is a good way to discover hidden talents. It's also a good way to figure out what you don't want to do in your future career!
- When volunteering, remember that people with the least experience sometimes have to do the least exciting jobs. Be patient and remember that everybody has to start somewhere. Learn everything you can, and show that you're ready for new challenges.

Think ahead.

- Next time you're in the kind of store you might like to work in some day, ask if they have any entry-level jobs, and find out how old you have to be to apply for them.
- You don't have to wait until you're old enough for businesses to hire you. Think of ways that you might make money helping neighbors and friends – like babysitting, mowing lawns, shoveling snow, walking dogs, etc.

Colleges and employers want to know what you like and how you contribute to the world. Use this page to tell them.



Activities Checklist

Check all the activities that apply to your life. Add any that are not listed.

<input type="checkbox"/> Sports Team	<input type="checkbox"/> Political Campaign
<input type="checkbox"/> School Club	<input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Band	<input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer Program
<input type="checkbox"/> Choir	<input type="checkbox"/> Part-Time Job
<input type="checkbox"/> Musical Instrument	<input type="checkbox"/> Help Family or Community Member
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Competition
<input type="checkbox"/> School Play	OTHER
<input type="checkbox"/> School Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Group at Place of Worship	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Scouts	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Special School Project	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Babysit	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Use this form to certify your participation in a school or community activity. Ask an adult sponsor or coach to sign.



CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

Date: _____

To Whom It May Concern:

I certify that _____ (name of student) has participated in _____ (name of club or activity) from _____ (start date) to _____ (end date).

Please don't hesitate to contact me should you have any questions about this student's participation.

Sincerely,

Signature of Adult Sponsor or Coach:

Printed Name of Adult Sponsor or Coach:

Contact phone number or e-mail:
