



Hosting a Career Exploration Visit

Bridging the Business/Education Gap!

The **Digital Safari Academy @ Mt. Diablo High School** in Concord, CA (DSA) is a three year college and career program beginning in the sophomore year of high school. **The goal of the DSA is to integrate multimedia design with the core curriculum** through project-based learning. The Academy has won over a dozen statewide awards for web design and design excellence.

The DSA has been selected as one of two academies in the nation to participate in the Career Academies Research Project - a pilot program to develop models for increasing student exposure to careers and career paths through enhanced interaction with businesses and employers. The Career Academies Research Project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Our students would like to make a Career Exploration Visit to your company. Our students are the future and we need your help to prepare them to be their best!



Exploring and Inspiring

As part of the Career Academies Research Project, our sophomore and junior students participate in **Career Exploration Visits** to cooperating host companies to introduce them to different types of settings where graduates within their career areas typically work. Beforehand, DSA students will have participated in workshops at school to research your company, plan interview questions and identify what they hope to observe and learn. The goals of a Career Exploration Visit are to:



- Expand awareness of jobs, careers, and work environments connected to a theme
- Make connections between what is learned at school and what is expected in the workplace
- Observe how employees apply job-specific skills, how transferable skills are used in a variety of jobs, and how technology is used in the workplace
- Develop the skills to interact comfortably and confidently with working adults
- Gain an awareness of the academic, technical and personal skills required to get and keep jobs

The Digital Safari Academy: Redefining School, Redefining Cool!

Over their three years in the Academy, students work on a series of academic and multimedia projects completed using industry standard multimedia tools. Through the completion of these projects, students work towards mastery of skills in graphic design, desktop publishing, animation, interactive authoring, photography, sound and video production, 3D design and presentation software.

Additionally, the nature of the project-based-learning environment gives students a variety of experiences in planning, management of people and resources, working with clients and meeting deadlines while they learn to be confident, self-sufficient, and creative problem solvers – all important job skills for the economy of the 21st century. Our project design methodology has been adapted by numerous programs around the country, and our annual Innovation Project is a model for the involvement of the business community in the day to day management of classroom projects.

Hosting a Career Exploration Visit

A Career Exploration Visit consists of 1) a welcome and orientation to the company, 2) a walking tour, and 3) interactive sessions in small groups with individual employees. Our group will be **18-20 students** plus 1-2 teachers (20 max.). Our total time on-site will be **10 am to Noon-ish** (we need to walk back to BART and return to Concord by 3 pm).

Typical Agenda

1) Welcome and Orientation (approx. 30 min.)

One or more company representatives will greet the group, gather students in a conference room or other appropriate space, introduce any staff members who are present, then paint the big picture of the organization (its mission, products, markets, clients, etc.), show examples of the company's work and engage the students in a discussion and Q&A session about how the various members of your team work together. One of our goals is to expose our students to the wide range of opportunities available in the field of multimedia.



2) Walking Tour (approx. 30 min.)

One of the purposes of a walking tour is for students to get a physical feel for the workplace, to see how different people/departments contribute to the delivery of products or services, and to briefly meet a variety of people who perform the many functions needed to make the business a success.

3) Career Exploration Interviews in Small Groups of 5-7 Students (3-4 sessions of 15-20 mins. with 1-2 employees - 60 min. total)

Students will break into small groups of 5 to 7 then meet with one or two employees in a particular role or department for 15-20 minutes, then rotate to another session with employees in different roles.



During each segment, students will interact with the employee(s) to learn more about their jobs, their career paths, transferable skills, etc. If possible, we'd like these sessions to be in or around individual workstations, equipment, etc., and see actual examples of the types of work people are doing. At the same time, we recognize the sensitivity of the work your team may be doing.

Ideally we'd like to create opportunities for brief interactive learning experiences in these small group sessions. For example, the small group could be challenged to create marketing messages for an imaginary client or product. Or, students could be invited to analyze an ad or website for key elements designed for target audiences. Simple, brief, engaging.

About Our Students

Over 75% of our students qualify as "at-risk" – socially, economically, academically, and/or English-challenged. They're great young people and very well-behaved. Your work place will be a totally new environment for them - they may be shy or quiet until they become accustomed to meeting and interacting with unfamiliar adults. Do not mistake shyness for lack of interest! Even reserved students will gain a great deal just by having spent time at your workplace and meeting your team. We appreciate your support and cooperation!

Contact Information

Mark Westwind, Career Exploration Coordinator

Digital Safari Academy, Mt. Diablo High School, Concord, CA
925-372-8486 (direct) - mark@digitalsafari.org - www.digitalsafari.org/careers