

Who Are the People in *Your* Neighborhood?



Children are curious about the work that people do in their community. Teachers can help children understand more about their communities and think about what they might like to do when they grow up by helping children identify a variety of community workers and the many services they provide.

-  **Begin with workers children have observed.**
Help the children list the jobs their parents or other family members do. Work with them to find a tool or picture of a tool that a particular worker would use, such as a keyboard or laptop for the office worker, a spoon for the restaurant worker, a hammer for the construction worker, cash register for the retail worker, a toy tractor for the farmer, or a toy stethoscope for the nurse. Let the children tell the group how the tool is used. Consider adding these tools to centers in the classroom so that children can explore them.
-  **Encourage parents to come into the classroom to talk about their jobs.**
Before the parents come, discuss possible interview questions with the children. Where do they work? What do they like about their job? What is hard about it? How did they prepare to get their job — college, apprenticeship, or training program?
-  **When possible, consider field trips to workplaces.**
Start with your school or program. Who are the people who work to make sure children are safe and comfortable at school? The custodians, cooks, bus drivers, and grounds crew have valuable skills that they can describe or demonstrate to children. Consider taking children to an office building, the post office, the public library, or a grocery store. Help children prepare questions and encourage them to ask their interview questions of the workers they meet.
-  **Read books to the children about a variety of occupations.**
Choose current books that do not reflect outdated stereotypes (e.g., doctors are men and nurses are women) in their text, illustrations, or photographs. Books should depict individuals with a variety of cultural backgrounds and ability levels in various occupational roles. After reading a book about an occupation, ask the children questions. How is that job useful? What do you need to know to do it? Would our neighborhood be different if no one provided that service?
-  **Help children represent their knowledge.**
Create a mural starting with a family, adding drawings of all the people whose work help their home and school community. Make a chart of all the occupations they have discussed and add to it throughout the year as children encounter new occupations. Ask children what types of jobs they might like to do when they grow up. Help them express their ideas through drawings, dictations, and dramatic play.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.



Children's Research Center
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
51 Gerty Dr. • Champaign, IL 61820-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386
Toll-free: 877-275-3227
E-mail: iel@illinois.edu
<https://illinoisearlylearning.org>



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