



Explore Creative Careers

Curricula for High School Grades 9-12

Exploring Career Options in the Arts
and Creative Fields, North Central WA



ARTSWA



**CAREER
CONNECT
WASHINGTON**

Unit 1, Lesson 1: Discovering Your Career Path with Ikigai



LESSON AUTHOR: ROSE WEAGANT

DESCRIPTION: This lesson plan aims to help high school students explore potential career paths within the art and creative industries by utilizing the concept of Ikigai, a Japanese concept that means “a reason for being” or finding one’s purpose. Students will engage in a worksheet activity to identify their passions, talents, what the world needs, and what they can be paid for, ultimately finding the intersection of these elements to discover their Ikigai in the context of arts and creative careers.

BIG IDEA: *Reflecting on one’s interests, talents and also societal needs in a methodical way can help people find direction towards a potential career path.*

WA STATE STANDARDS

- » ARTS (VISUAL)
- » ELA
- » CTE
- » SEL

GRADE LEVELS	High School (9th-12th Grades)
DURATION	1-2 60-minute sessions, depending on resources used
ARTS CONTENT FOCUS	Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Creative Writing, Design, Digital Media
CAREER CONNECTIONS	Career exploration Creative economy Creative industry

LEARNING GOALS

Understand the concept of Ikigai and its application in career exploration.

Identify personal passions and talents related to the arts and creative industries.

Recognize the importance of aligning personal interests with societal needs and economic viability when choosing a career path.

Apply the concept of Ikigai to discover potential career paths within the arts and creative industries.

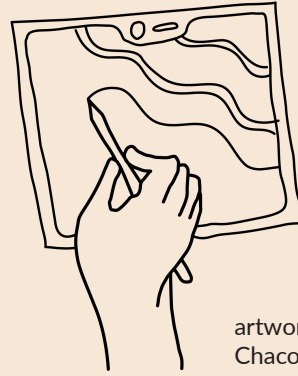
VOCABULARY:

Ikigai - the Japanese concept of working with your life’s purpose

Intrinsic motivation - when you are personally motivated not for external reward

Extrinsic motivation - when you are motivated for external reasons

Explore Creative Careers: Discovering Your Career Path with Ikigai



artwork by Sabrina Chacon-Barajas

MATERIALS:

- » Ikigai worksheet (attached)
- » Writing tool

INSTRUCTIONS:

» ENGAGE: INTRODUCTION TO IKIGAI

"Ikigai is the Japanese concept blending two Japanese words: 'iki' (meaning 'life') and 'gai' or 'kai' (meaning 'worth'). Ikigai is the balance of doing what a person loves, what they are good at, what serves their community and what they can get paid for. Where all four ideas intersect, is one's Ikigai. The French also use a similar concept called raison d'être, or 'reason for being.' Those who find their ikigai are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated."

Ask what intrinsically and extrinsically motivated mean.

"Understanding one's Ikigai can help them find which avenue of work to take."

Ask students their thoughts about their future work, whether they have a sense of their direction.

» EXPLORE: WORKSHEET INTRODUCTION & ACTIVITY

Distribute the Ikigai worksheet, explaining each quadrant and its significance (attached).

"There are certain times in our lives where we may find that we are good at our jobs and it may pay well, but we may not love it. Look at the places where love and skill meet--at passion! Your skills and getting paid intersect at your profession. Ikigai is all about balance."

Ask students' observations about how the worksheet is set up, where they notice areas of balance and imbalance.

Allow students time to reflect on their passions, talents, what the world needs, and what they can be paid for. Have them jot down their thoughts in each quadrant.

» EXPRESS: SHARE REFLECTIONS

Pair Sharing: Pair students up to discuss their reflections and insights with a partner.

Explore Creative Careers: Discovering Your Career Path with Ikigai

Group Discussion: Facilitate a whole-class discussion where students can share their thoughts, discoveries, and any challenges they encountered while using the Ikigai worksheet for their self reflection.

OPTIONAL RESOURCES & COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IDEAS:

» [ARTSWA.COM](https://arts.wa.gov/) | Share a video from the Explore Creative Careers series on local creative professionals.

Invite a local artist or creative professional to speak with your students. Partner with local arts organizations, galleries, or creative businesses to provide students with internship opportunities or job shadowing experiences. Collaborate with career counselors or advisors to provide ongoing support and guidance to students as they explore their career paths.

» [NCWARTS.ORG](https://ncwaarts.org/) | North Central Washington Alliance

» [ARTSWA.COM](https://arts.wa.gov/) | Native Artists Directory, available after Fall 2025 through the Tribal Cultural Affairs program at ArtsWA

» [METHOWARTS.ORG](https://methowarts.org/) | With expertise spanning communications, operations, education, & event coordination, Methow Arts works to promote & integrate the arts in Okanogan County

WASHINGTON STATE STANDARDS:

WA State Arts Standards (Visual Art):

- » Performance Standard (VA:Cn11.1.I) a. Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.
- » Performance Standard (VA:Cn10.1.II) a. Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through artmaking.

WA State ELA Standards:

- » S.L.2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

WA CTE Standard:

- » Leadership: 1.4 The student will be involved in activities that require applying theory, problem-solving, and using critical and creative thinking skills while understanding outcomes of related decisions.
- » Leadership: 1.5 The student will demonstrate self-advocacy skills by achieving planned, individual goals.

Explore **Creative Careers:** Discovering Your Career Path with Ikigai

- » Career Development: Investigate career paths and develop employability skills based on a coherent sequence of academic and CTE courses.

WA State SEL:

- » St.1: Self-Awareness: Benchmark 1B: Demonstrates awareness of personal and collective identity encompassing strengths, areas for growth, aspirations, and cultural and linguistic assets.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL STANDARDS OR FRAMEWORKS

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success B-LS 9:

- » Decision-making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias



Worksheet:

What is Ikigai?



Ikigai is the Japanese concept blending two Japanese words: “iki” (meaning “life”) and “gai” or “kai” (meaning “worth”). Ever heard of Ikigai? It’s like finding that sweet spot where what you love, what you’re good at, what the world needs, and what you can get paid for all come together.



There are certain times in our lives where we may find that we are good at our jobs and it may pay well, but you may not love it. Look at the places where love and skill meet--at passion! Your skills and getting paid intersect at your profession.

Ikigai is all about balance. Can you see how the question mark places have different types of imbalance?

When you think about what your future work looks like, do you know where you’re heading?

Now you get to fill out these questions and create your own unique ikigai worksheet.

What are the things you love to do?

(example: I love to dance, be out in nature, practice traditional arts, etc.)

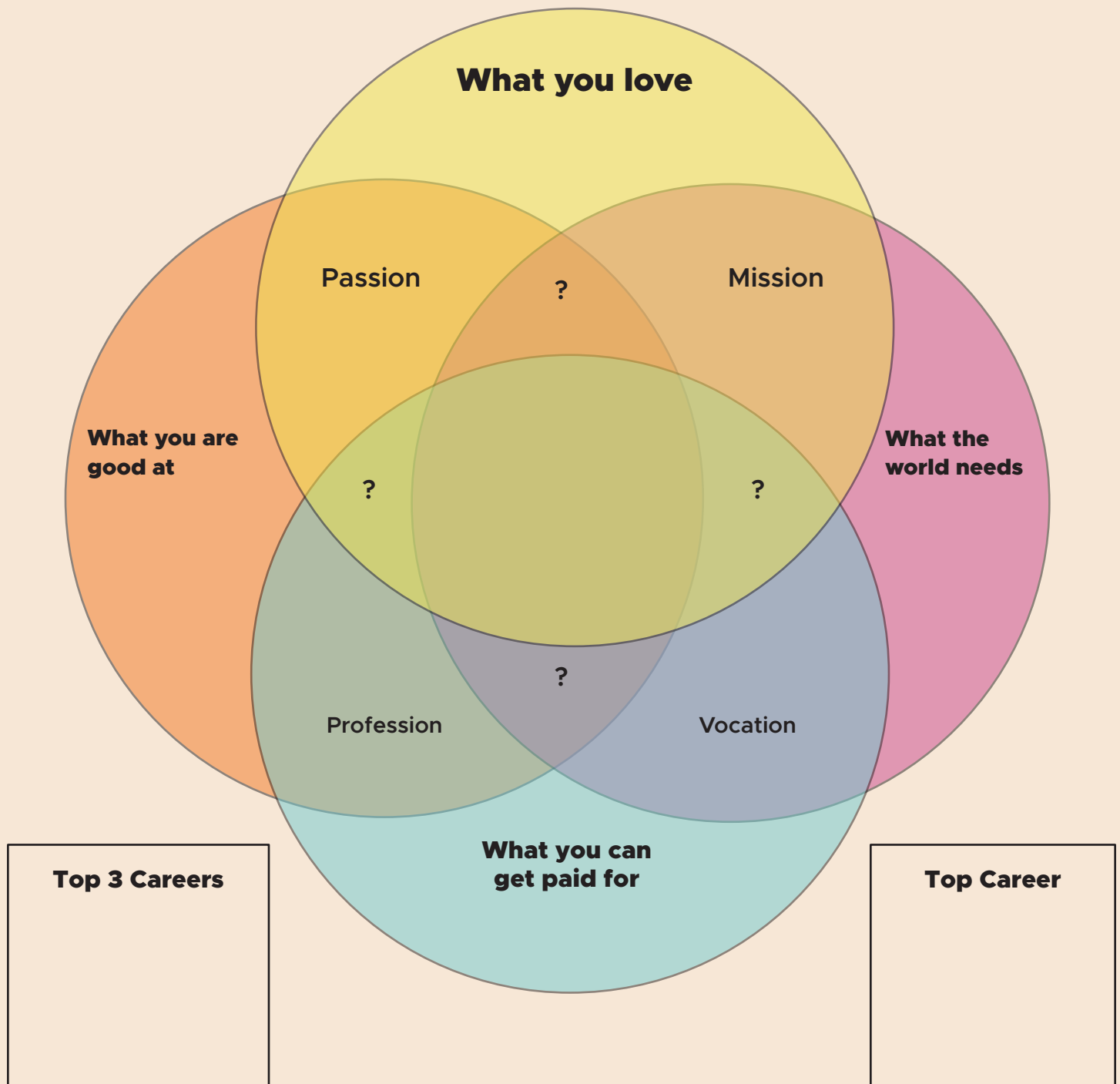
What are the things that you’re good at?

(example: name off things you not that your friends and family think you’re good at. What do you offer that is a unique skillset?)

How do you want to contribute to your community/nation/or the world? (example: I like working for social justice or I want to clean the oceans, etc)

What are the stills you can be paid for?

Now fill in the answers to the questions here in the circles and then look for careers or work that meet your passion, mission, vocation, and profession section



After you fill out your chart, take a look at the list of careers the group came up with and see if any of those meet more than two of your ikigai quadrants. Do any of them interest you? If so, add them to your own list.

Once you find your 3 choices, pair with another student to share your Ikigai chart and your top 3. Ask each other questions to help you narrow down your career focus. (Example: Is this career available where you want to live? How expensive is the training for this career? What do you want to achieve in this career?)

Unit 1, Lesson 2: Career Paths Connection



LESSON AUTHOR: ROSE WEAGANT

DESCRIPTION: Looking at the variety of careers, students are able to compare careers with considerations like location, pay, education requirements, needed skills, and leaders in the specific industry. Giving students local connections in the creative economy in Washington offers students a viable future for meaningful creative work.

BIG IDEA: *Reflecting on one's interests, talents and also societal needs in a methodical way can help people find direction towards a potential career path.*

WA STATE STANDARDS

- » ARTS (VISUAL)
- » ELA
- » CTE
- » SEL

GRADE LEVELS

High School (9th-12th Grades)

DURATION

Two 60-minute sessions

ARTS CONTENT FOCUS

Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Creative Writing, Design, Digital Media

CAREER CONNECTIONS

Career exploration
Creative economy
Creative industry

LEARNING GOALS

Understand the variety and opportunity in the creative industry.

Discover meaningful work that blends passions and skills related to the arts and creative industries

Recognize the importance of aligning personal interests with societal needs and economic viability when choosing a career path

Apply the concept of Ikigai to discover potential career paths within the arts and creative industries

VOCABULARY:

Applied art: a collective term for the applied design and creation of functional objects and structures (i.e. graphic designers, video game designers, engineers, directors, ceramicists, etc.)

Artistic Field: specific area or discipline within the arts, such as music, dance, or design

Explore Creative Careers: Career Paths Connection

Creative Career, Creative Worker: creative, cultural, or artistic-based pursuits are those that use the unique human quality of individual expression to produce ideas, content, goods, and services

Career Pathway: education and training needed and the jobs/wages you can expect as you advance in a career field

Creative Economy: an economy of for-profit and nonprofit creative industries, artists and artist workforce, educators, entrepreneurs, vendors, policy makers and funders that produce and distribute creativity- and artistic-based goods and services

Washington state's creative economy has been defined to encompass the following sectors: (1) Architecture and Living; (2) Creative Technology (e.g., video games, web design, podcasts); (3) Culinary Arts and Beverages; (4) Cultural Institutions; (5) Design and Advertising; (6) Fashion; (7) Film, Television, and Radio; (8) Music, Performing Arts, and Visual Arts; and (9) Publishing.

Creative Industry - a conglomerate or category of business and/or businesses that pertain to the production or distribution of the arts or are driven by creativity outputs [i.e. creative goods and services] and roll up into the creative sector

Creative industries are composed of arts-centric businesses that range from nonprofit museums, symphonies, and theaters to for-profit film, architecture, advertising companies and individual artists and performers

Fine art – art in which objects are produced that are beautiful rather than useful (i.e. painting, music, theater, dance, sculpture, etc.)

Heritage or Culture-bearing art – arts based in cultural heritage and preservation (i.e. dancing, weaving, singing, beadwork and storytelling from traditional foundations)

MATERIALS:

- » Ikigai worksheet (attached)
- » Writing tool
- » Internet access and career exploration websites (e.g., Bureau of Labor Statistics, CareerOneStop, [Find your perfect role in the creative industries - Creative Careers](#)), supplies for presentations

Explore Creative Careers: Career Paths Connection

INSTRUCTIONS:

» ENGAGE: OPENING DISCUSSION

Invite students to brainstorm a list of different types of creative careers across theater, music, dance, design, and fine arts. Have students write down these jobs for creative workers and artists on sticky notes and put them on a wall. Be ready to add some careers that they may not think of (i.e. make-up artist, sound engineer, lighting designer, production manager, etc.)

Prompt discussion about the list – what are ones they had not considered; what surprises them. Keep the careers visible throughout your lessons. If there is opportunity to add to the list, please do so.

Review vocabulary and ask students how they would organize the array of careers they brainstormed. What are the ways in which these careers align with each other? ArtsWA organizes arts careers into three clusters, though there's overlap: education, creative industries (which includes fine art and applied arts), and culture bearing.

» EXPLORE: WHAT DO CREATIVE WORKERS DO AND HOW?

Have students look through the list of careers and use career exploration websites to find out what skills and education/experience are involved.

Guide students through filling out the Ikigai worksheet to think about potential career paths within the arts and creative industries. Provide examples to illustrate how passions, talents, societal needs, and economic viability intersect in various professions.

Allow students time to explore different career options within the arts and creative industries that align with their Ikigai. Encourage students to continue exploring their identified career paths in the arts and creative industry.

» EXPRESS: CAREER PATH PRESENTATION

Have students find at least three interesting occupations that would strike a balance within their Ikigai chart within fine arts (painting, sculpting, dance, theater), applied arts (design, creation, editing, technical arts), or cultural arts (traditional arts, cultural heritage arts, culture bearing). The chosen career might overlap in a variety of ways within the creative industry (a dancer might also be a culture bearer, and a basket weaver may also be a fine artist).

Explore Creative Careers: Career Paths Connection

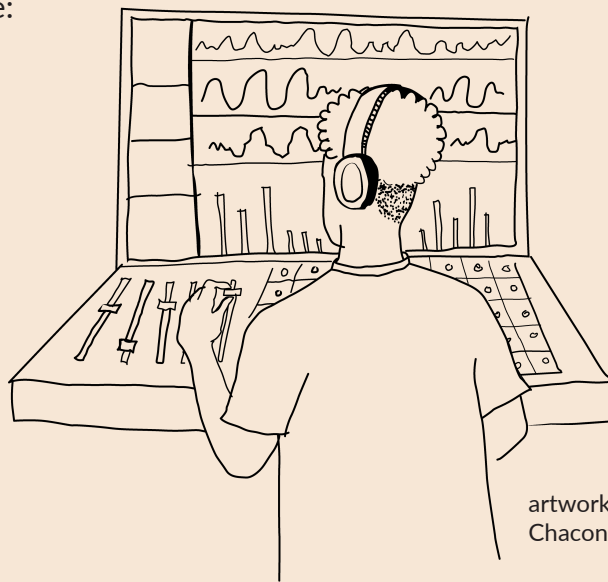
Once they have three different careers, have them pair and share with a peer. Have students listen actively and then ask each other questions to help their partner narrow down to a top career option.

Have students develop a report or presentation of their top career option, explaining how it aligns with their Ikigai. The report/presentation must include:

- » Ikigai findings
- » Three careers considered
- » Reasons for choosing top career

Of top career, include:

- » A brief summary of the job
- » Where they can work/annual income
- » Leaders in the field
- » Education needed
- » What they are most excited about
- » Next steps in achieving their career



artwork by Sabrina Chacon-Barajas

For class presentations, encourage students to incorporate their creative/artistic skill as part of their presentation. Examples include: A brief summary of the job

- » Sharing original artwork
- » Performing a dramatic scene, dance or piece of music
- » Showing a slideshow or video
- » Sharing cultural aspects of their heritage
- » Creating an infographic based on research findings (public speaking opt-out)

Provide time limit for presentations; presentations may take 2-3 days, depending on the level of discussions within the presentations.

OPTIONAL RESOURCES & COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IDEAS

Books/articles on finding purpose and passion in career choices

Worksheet: Presentation Guidelines (attached)

- » [ARTSWA.COM](https://www.artswa.com) | Share a video from the Explore Creative Careers series on local creative professionals.

Explore Creative Careers: Career Paths Connection

Invite a local artist or creative professional to speak with your students. Partner with local arts organizations, galleries, or creative businesses to provide students with internship opportunities or job shadowing experiences. Collaborate with career counselors or advisors to provide ongoing support and guidance to students as they explore their career paths.

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WA State SEL:

- » St.1: Self-Awareness: Benchmark 1B: Demonstrates awareness of personal and collective identity encompassing strengths, areas for growth, aspirations, and cultural and linguistic assets.

OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL STANDARDS OR FRAMEWORKS

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success B-LS 9:

- » Decision-making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias



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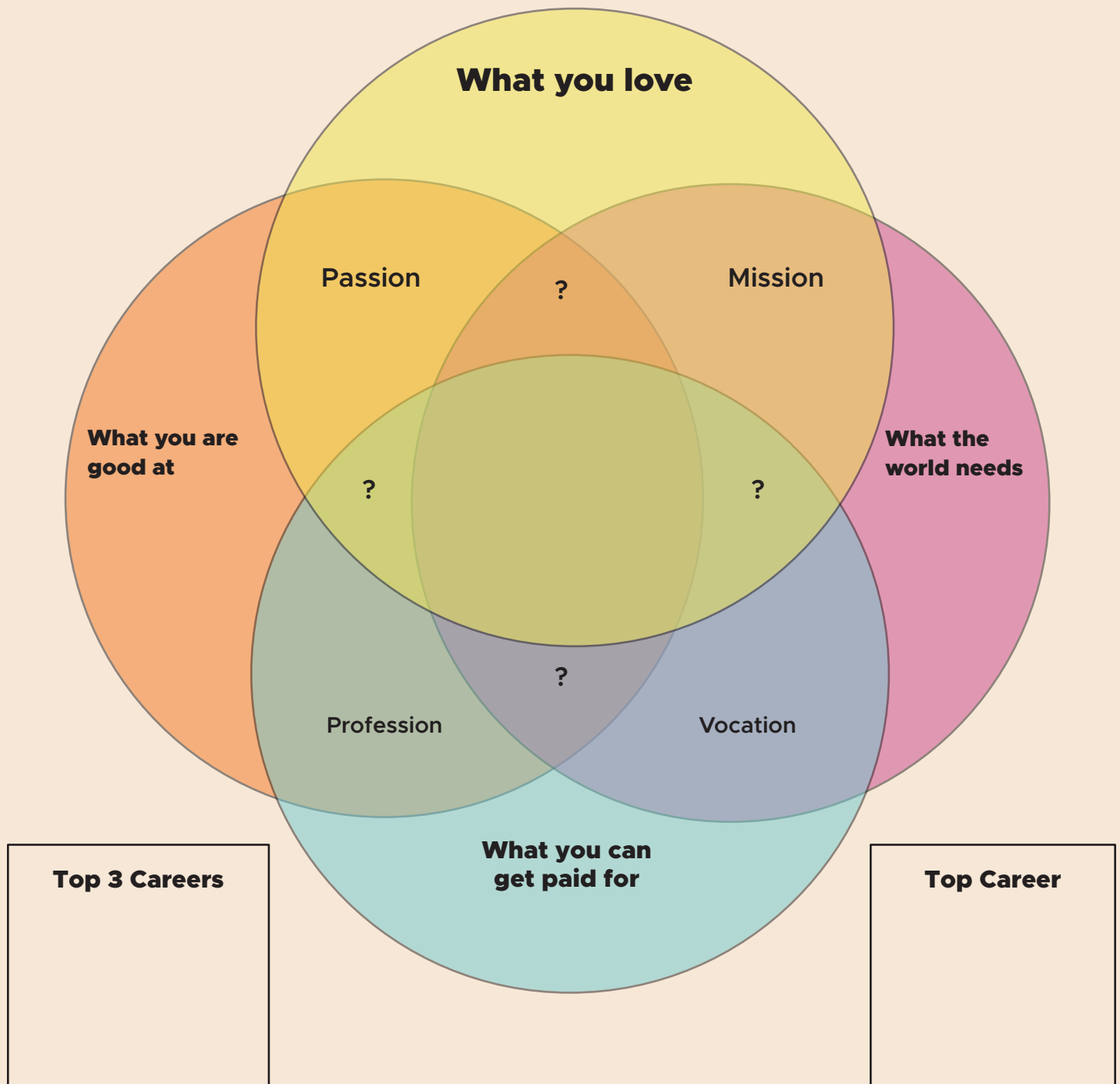
What are the things that you’re good at?

(example: name off things you not that your friends and family think you’re good at. What do you offer that is a unique skillset?

How do you want to contribute to your community/nation/or the world? (example: I like working for social justice or I want to clean the oceans, etc)

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Once you find your 3 choices, pair with another student to share your Ikigai chart and your top 3. Ask each other questions to help you narrow down your career focus. (Example: Is this career available where you want to live? How expensive is the training for this career? What do you want to achieve in this career?)

Worksheet: Career Path Presentation Guidelines



Alright, artists! It's time to explore our passions and future paths. Today, we're diving into the world of careers that match our passions and purpose. First up, let's hear from each of you about your dream careers. Share how they light up your Ikigai chart.

Now let's find a cool job within fine arts (think painting, sculpting, dance, theater), applied arts (like design, creating, editing, or technical arts), or cultural arts (stuff like traditional arts, cultural heritage arts, or culture bearing).

Here's the twist – these careers might mix and match! For example, a dancer might also be a culture bearer, or a master basket weaver could be a fine artist too. Explore the overlaps and get creative with your choices. It's all about finding that perfect blend of passion and purpose!

LESSON AUTHOR: ROSE WEAGANT

TOP CAREER PRESENTATION!

You can present your new career however you choose! Tell us the details of this new career and share what you've learned so far. Here are some examples:

- Sharing a fine art piece you've made
- Performing a dramatic scene
- Perform an original dance
- Show a powerpoint presentation
- Create and share a short video
- Perform a piece of music
- Share cultural aspects of your heritage
- Create and submit an infographic based on your findings

Answer these questions to give us a better idea about your top career:

- » What are the types of work you would do in this career?
- » What does success in this career look like to you? How much can you expect to get paid annually?
- » Who are the big creatives in this field? What training or school do you need?
- » What are the first steps you can take to get into this career?

THE DETAILS (What you need to tell us)

- » A brief summary of the job
- » Best locations for the job
- » What's the annual pay?
- » Leaders in the field
- » The training you'll need
- » What you're most excited about
- » Next steps in achieving your career



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Chacon-Barajas



Unit 1, Lesson 3: Connecting with Mentors



LESSON AUTHOR: ROSE WEAGANT

DESCRIPTION: This lesson plan builds on previous lessons about Ikigai and exploring cultural influences in creative careers. Students will take concrete steps toward their chosen art careers by identifying and reaching out to mentors in their desired fields. They will learn how to write professional introductory letters and prepare for informational interviews.

BIG IDEA: *Learning directly from community members about their creative careers gives students real-life, practical examples and connects them to potential mentors.*

WA STATE STANDARDS

- » ARTS (VISUAL)
- » ELA
- » CTE
- » SEL

GRADE LEVELS	High School (9th-12th Grades)
DURATION	Four 60-minute sessions, depending on resources used
ARTS CONTENT FOCUS	Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Creative Writing, Design, Digital Media
CAREER CONNECTIONS	Career exploration Creative economy Creative industry

LEARNING GOALS

- Develop professional communication skills by writing an introductory letter to a potential mentor.
- Understand the importance of mentorship in career development.
- Prepare and conduct a professional interview with a mentor to gain insights into a chosen career path.
- Reflect on the information gathered from the interview to make informed career decisions.

VOCABULARY:

Mentor: trusted counselor or guide

Networking: the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifi-

Explore Creative Careers: Connecting with Mentors

cally, the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business

Professional communication: exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in all forms of communication

Informational interview: a meeting where one asks a professional to share their knowledge and insights into their field of expertise

Career path: education and training needed and the jobs/wages you can expect as you advance in a career field

MATERIALS:

- » Professional introductory letter template (attached)
- » List of potential mentors in the community (i.e. North Central Washington Arts Alliance, Colville Tribes' Regional Artist Resource Directory, ArtsWA's Native Artists Directory)
- » Computers or paper for drafting letters,
- » Access to email or mailing resources



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INSTRUCTIONS SESSION 1:

» ENGAGE: INTRODUCTION TO MENTORSHIP AND NETWORKING

Explain the role of mentors in career development, emphasizing how they can provide guidance, knowledge, and support. Provide a personal example, or refer to artists' stories of mentorship in [Explore Creative Careers videos](#) or other resources.

Discuss the benefits of networking within the arts and creative industries. Provide a personal example.

Have students identify potential mentors – who do they already know? Allow students time to research local artists using online resources (i.e. North Central Washington Arts Alliance, Colville Tribes' Regional Artist Resource Directory, Arts WA Native American Artists Directory).

» EXPLORE: PREPARING TO MAKE CONTACT

Teach students the components of a professional introductory letter. Provide examples and a template (attached).

Explore Creative Careers: Connecting with Mentors

Have students draft their introductory letters to potential mentors, stating their interest in the mentor's field, their reasons for seeking guidance, and a request for an interview.

INSTRUCTIONS SESSION 2:

» EXPLORE: PREPARING TO MAKE CONTACT (CONTINUED)

Have students exchange letters with a peer for feedback and suggestions.

Afterwards, give students time to revise their letters based on peer feedback and teacher guidance.

INSTRUCTIONS SESSION 3:

» EXPLORE: PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Discuss the importance of preparing thoughtful questions. Provide examples of good interview questions.

In pairs, have students practice conducting interviews, taking turns being the interviewer and the interviewee.

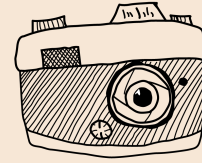
Example Interview Questions:

- » Can you tell me about your career journey and how you got started in this field?
- » What do you enjoy most about your job?
- » What are some challenges you have faced in your career, and how did you overcome them?
- » What skills do you consider essential for someone entering this industry?
- » Can you describe a typical day in your job?
- » What advice would you give to someone aspiring to enter this field?
- » How do you stay inspired and motivated in your work?
- » Have students create a list of questions tailored for the potential mentors they selected.
- » Can you describe a typical day in your job?
- » What advice would you give to someone aspiring to enter this field?
- » How do you stay inspired and motivated in your work?

Have students create a list of questions tailored for the potential mentors they selected.

INSTRUCTIONS SESSION 4:

» **EXPRESS: INTERVIEWS & REFLECTION**



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Have students schedule and conduct their interviews outside of class time.

After the interviews, have students write a reflection essay summarizing their interview experience, what they learned, how it may have impacted their career deliberations, and what their next steps are in pursuing their career goals.

Have students share a summary of their reflections with the class, including any new insights or changes in their career plans.

Encourage ongoing mentorship relationships and further exploration of career opportunities.

OPTIONAL RESOURCES & COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IDEAS

Organize a creative careers panel where students can hear from multiple professionals.

Incorporate technology by having students create a digital portfolio to share with mentors or future schools or scholarships.

Partner with local arts organizations to identify potential mentors.

Arrange visits to local studios, theaters, or galleries to meet professionals in person.

WASHINGTON STATE STANDARDS:

WA State English Language Arts Standards:

- » College and Career Readiness: 3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

WA State CTE Standard:

- » Leadership. 1.3 The student will demonstrate oral, interpersonal, written, and electronic communication and presentation skills and understands how to apply those skills.

Explore Creative Careers: Connecting with Mentors

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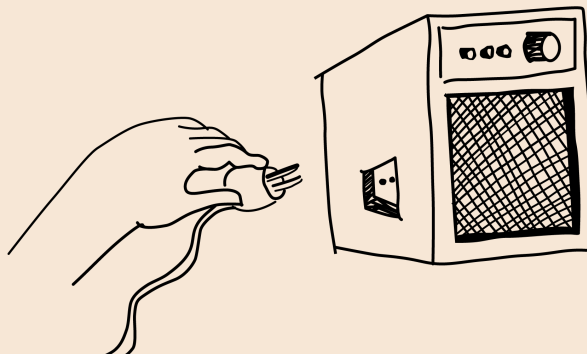
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OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL STANDARDS OR FRAMEWORKS:

ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success:

- » B-LS 9: Decision-making informed by gathering evidence, getting others' perspectives and recognizing personal bias

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Worksheet: Professional Introductory Letter



KEY COMPONENTS

Subject Line:

- » Clearly state the purpose of your email.

Introduction:

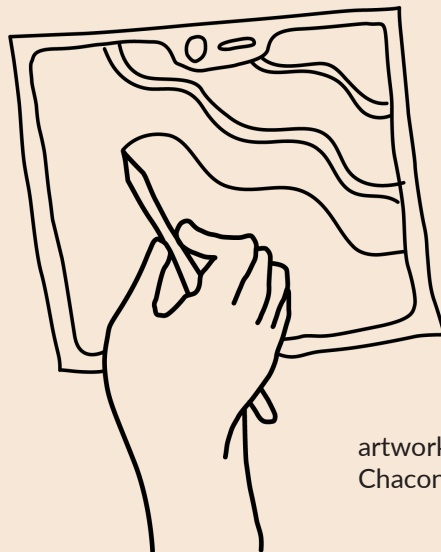
- » Greet the mentor respectfully. Introduce yourself with your name, school, and grade level. Mention why you are writing to them specifically.

Body:

- » Explain your interest in the mentor's field and why you admire their work.
- » State your intent to learn more about the field through an informational interview.
- » Politely request a meeting or interview.
- » Offer options for how and when the meeting could take place.

Closing:

- » Express gratitude for their consideration.
- » Sign off with your full name and contact information.
- » Optionally include a link to your portfolio or relevant work if applicable.



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Worksheet: Professional Introductory Letter



LETTER TEMPLATE

Dear [Mentor's Name],

Introduction:

I hope this email finds you well. My name is [Your Name], and I am currently a [grade level] student at [Your School]. I am writing to you because I am very interested in [mentor's field/industry], and I have learned about your impressive work in [specific area or project relevant to the mentor's expertise].

Body:

I am particularly drawn to [specific aspect of the mentor's career or industry] and am eager to learn more about it. As part of my career exploration in the arts and creative industries, I am seeking guidance from experienced professionals who can offer insights into the field. I would be incredibly grateful if you could spare some time for an informational interview.

Request for Meeting/Interview:

I would love to hear about your career journey, the challenges you have faced, and any advice you might have for someone aspiring to enter this industry. A meeting at your convenience, whether in person, over the phone, or via Zoom, would be greatly appreciated. I am available [mention your availability or suggest a few dates and times].

Closing:

Thank you very much for considering my request. I genuinely believe that your insights would be invaluable to me as I navigate my career path. I look forward to the possibility of speaking with you.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]

[Your Contact Information]

[Optional: Link to your portfolio or any relevant work]

