

Networking Information

What is networking?

When you let family, friends and people know that you are looking for a job as well as collect information about possible job opportunities in your field, seek feedback on your resume, and pursue job search strategies.

Networking involves making contacts in what is commonly known as the “hidden market.” It is estimated that 85% of jobs are never advertised but filled through contacts. There are two types of contacts:

1. Primary or warm contacts: Networking with people you know personally.
2. Secondary or cold contacts: Networking with people you do not know personally.

Remember that when networking you are building relationships and that it is important to be professional.

Who are my contacts?

The first step to networking is to make a list of contacts. Here is an example:

- College faculty and staff
- Classmates
- Practicum staff
- Family
- Friends
- Neighbours
- People from church, temple, mosque, etc.
- People whom you may volunteer with
- Social acquaintances
- Former employers and co-workers
- People at clubs and other organizations that you may be involved with.

These constitute your primary contacts. If you find your list is long, you may want to prioritize your list. Contacts will suggest your name to other people, who will in turn become your secondary contacts. Even though you may not know these secondary contacts, a referral from your primary contact will serve as an introduction for you.

Developing Contacts from Multi-Sources

Here is a list of other places you can go to create list of contacts for networking:

- Attend Early Childhood Education conferences or seminars. These are good events at which to network;
- Consult Directory of Child Care Centres, Early Intervention Programs and Family Child Care Programs (available from Nova Scotia Department of Community Services); and
- Consult Yellow Pages (looking up daycares, centres or related Early Childhood locations).
- Check Early Childhood Education or related websites, particularly professional organizations or associations.
- Check professional journals, newspapers, other print media.

Organization

Make sure to create your own filing system, whether its paper based or on the computer or on index cards. It is important to keep track of all your contacts, calls, informational interviews, and follow-up commitments. You should keep the phone number of all primary contacts and the names and details of secondary contacts. With secondary contacts, you should get into the habit of including more specific details of secondary contacts, such as job titles, and addresses, along with dates when you made contact, the method (i.e., by phone, by e-mail, etc.) what transpired, and whether there was any follow-up.

Research

Before making any contact with secondary contacts, make sure to conduct research on his or her daycare/organization. This will not only ensure that you are more prepared, but it will lower your anxiety and increase your confidence when speaking to the secondary contacts. You will also sound more professional and demonstrate an interest by having background information on that specific day care / organization.

What information should I gather?

- History and corporate culture;
- Organization's mission/philosophy and goals
- The age group of children it serves
- Structure and any other locations
- Opportunities for career advancement, benefits, and other human resource issues

Conducting this research is important, as it will also help you decide if want to work for that particular organization, and therefore whether you need to make a contact.

Where should I go to gather the information?

More and more organizations have their own website, but if this is not the case, you may want to contact someone you knows the organization, is working or has worked there or a peer who conducted their practicum there. If unsure, a good starting point is to talk to College faculty or staff.

If you need to determine the correct spelling and job title of the contact person or need specifics on the location, you may want to call that specific daycare / organization and obtain these details.

Informational Interviews

Whether or not you have an informational interview with your primary or secondary contacts, you will be developing relationships and gathering information and advice. The purpose of an informational interview is not necessarily to get a job. It is more to:

- Be seen, that is, to allow someone to learn about you and your professional abilities.
- Learn about potential employment opportunities.
- Find out about potential daycares/organizations that you may want to work with.
- Acquaint yourself with needs/concerns that will be advantageous in future interviews.
- Clarify to yourself the type of Early Childhood Education work that you would like to go into.
- Expand your professional network;
- Learn valuable information about the Early Childhood Education field;
- Evaluate how your educational and work experience fits with the positions that you will be applying for;
- Gain an insight into non-advertised employment opportunities.
- Identify your professional strengths and weaknesses.

- Enhance your interview and communication skills.

Methods of obtaining an Informational Interview

By phone

Write down a script before you speak to the person. This will lower your anxiety but it will also help you come across as organized and professional. Make sure to have your diary or agenda book in front of you in case the person has the time to meet with you.

Here is a list of the stages of the phone call:

- Introduce yourself (when you will be graduating with an Early Childhood Education Diploma);
- Describe how you were referred to the contact person;
- State why you are calling (a request for a 15 to 20 minute Informational Interview to get to know their daycare/organization further and to obtain general advice as a student who will be entering the workforce in the near future);
- State that you are not seeking a job at the moment, but are exploring possibilities and trying to embark on a career in Early Childhood Education;
- Be prepared to explain a little about your own background and why Early Childhood Education appeals to you. But again, be sure that you are not giving the impression that you are asking them for a job.
- Remember to respect the busy schedule of the contact person.

Options

If the person cannot meet you, ask if you could address some questions to them. At the end, thank them for their time and ask if you can forward a copy of your resume. Make sure you have the correct spelling of their name, their job title, and their address.

If the person is not able to talk at that moment, ask them if you can send along a copy of your resume. Again, make sure you have the correct spelling of their name, their job title, and their address. Thank the person for their time.

By letter

As with a phone call, in a letter you will be requesting an appointment with the contact person.

Also see section on Cover Letter.

Parts of the letter:

Your name, address, phone and e-mail

Date

Their name, job title, centre / business name, address (make the sure the format is the same as with your address)

Salutation: Dear Ms. X / Mr. X:

Paragraph 1: Prepare a personal introduction and say why you are writing, and indicating that you will be graduating with an Early Childhood Education Diploma and would seek a 15 to 30 minute Informational Interview.

Paragraph 2: Discuss your qualifications, skills, and work experience as they relate to Early Childhood Education. Start with Early Childhood Education Diploma, and include information about your practicum experiences, along with highlights of some of the courses and Early Childhood Education experiences you have had.

Paragraph 3: Thank the person and indicate your desire to provide additional information.

Yours sincerely,

Sign your name

Type your name here

Enclosure: Resume

As with a cover letter, make sure to:

- Stick to one page; keep sentences, phrases, and paragraphs short.
- Direct the letter to the individual hiring and be sure to spell his or her name correctly.
- If no contact name is provided, you can use the phrase, 'To whom it may concern'.
- Always include your name, full address, phone and e-mail address, plus the date.
- Use specific examples from your background of skill/s, strength/s, and experience/s (use the job posting to make sure that you have addressed the skills and areas that the employer is looking for).
- Be friendly and professional in your letter.
- Give clear reasons why they should hire you.
- Format your cover letter so it is visually appealing and easy to read.
- Check for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
- Use good paper.

Preparing for the Informational Interview

Research

You should try to gather more detailed information on the specific daycare / organization. This means taking the time to look at various sources such as:

- Daycare's/organization's website
- Daycare's/organization's pamphlets or other literature
- Annual reports
- Library reference materials

Questions to Ask

Depending upon your research, you may want to pick and choose from the following sample questions. You should also try to practice your introduction and your questions. Both may include information from your

research into that daycare/organization. You should also be prepared to have a spontaneous discussion and be prepared to move away from some of your prepared questions.

<p>Learning more about the person</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What career path did you take to get to where you are? Or, how did you enter the field of Early Childhood Education? Or, how did you get started in the field of Early Childhood Education? • What led you to this current position? • Why did you decide to work for this daycare? • What previous experience has been the most valuable in your current position? • What does your work week look like? Or, what are your duties and responsibilities? Or, how would you describe your typical day? • What is your favorite or most satisfying part of this job? • What part of the job do you find most challenging? • What are some of the things you do to stay current in the field of Early Childhood Education? • If your job continues as you like, what would be the next step in your career path? • If you were not in your current position, what kind of Early Childhood Education position do you think you would go into?
<p>Learning more about that daycare or organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your daycare differ from other daycares? • How would you describe the basic philosophy of your daycare? • How many people work in your daycare? • What is the ratio of children to teachers? • Do you see the daycare growing in the next few years? • What does the daycare do to contribute to its employees' professional development? • What is the average length of time that an employee stays in the same job? Are there incentives or disincentives for staying in the same job? • Is there any flexibility for employees in terms of dress, work hours, vacation schedule, etc.? • What opportunities for advancement are there? • Are there expectations to join professional associations or work outside work hours? • How does the daycare make use of information technology or computers? • What would you say are the current challenges faced by the daycare or, more generally, the field of Early Childhood Education?
<p>Learning about the qualities of working in the Early Childhood Education field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your opinion, what personal qualities or abilities are important for success in the field of Early Childhood Education? • What would you say employers are looking for when hiring? Is it applicants' education, work experience, skills, or other qualities?
<p>Learning more about the Early Childhood Education employment opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe the job prospects in Early Childhood Education in Metro (or whatever geographic area you are living in)? • How do you see the future of the Early Childhood Education field? • What kind of entry level positions are there? And which ones are best for learning as much as possible?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the salary ranges for the various levels at the daycare? • How do you see jobs in Early Childhood Education changing in the next five to ten years? • What special advice would you give a person entering the field of Early Childhood Education?
Learning more about Early Childhood Education as a career.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you say are some of the critical Early Childhood Education issues or problems? • Which professional associations or organizations do you think would be useful to join? • Are there professional journals that you think would be useful for me to consult? • What special advice would you give to a student seeking employment in Early Childhood Education?
Learning more about your own prospects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you mind taking a look at my resume? • What would you change about my resume? • Would you be able to suggest any areas that I need to develop, and how should I go about it? • With my present background, would you have any suggestions about other jobs or fields that I should also look into?
How to obtain other contacts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you recommend the best way to job hunt in the field of Early Childhood Education? Or, what is the best way to find out about jobs in this field? • Would you be able to recommend other people whom I should talk to? Or, can you refer me to anyone else whom I might speak with so as to continue my research? • When I call him/her, may I use your name?

As with a normal job interview, you need to:

- Make sure you know the location and how to get there;
- Dress formally and be well groomed;
- Make sure to bring your list of prepared questions along with a small notebook, pen, and extra resumes that include your references;
- Arrive at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time of your interview. This will give you a chance to relax and to read any notice boards or information at the site.

At the Interview

- Greet your contact person with a firm handshake and an enthusiastic smile.
- Wait for them to let you know where you should sit.
- Ask the person if it would be fine to take notes.
- Refer to your prepared questions but try not read word for word.
- Thank the contact person for their time and re-state the purpose of your meeting.
- Stay on track but do allow for spontaneous discussion.
- Show good eye contact, and use good manners, proper English, and avoid slang.
- Show interest and be receptive.
- Be aware of your own body language and avoid any nervous mannerism.
- Be positive and avoid any negative comments, particularly about past employers.
- If it seems appropriate, ask the contact person to offer feedback on your resume.

- Towards the end of the interview, ask the contact person if they would be able to recommend other people that it may be helpful to contact, but at the same time ask permission to use their name as a referral in contacting them.
- Thank the contact person for their time again and ask for a business card as this will give you the information you need in order to write a thank-you card or letter.
- Make sure to shake the contact person's hand as you leave.

After the interview

- Make sure to transfer any key information from the interview in your personalized filing system.
- Follow up with either a thank-you letter or card within one to three days of the interview.

Thank-you card

Make sure to:

- Buy a blank thank-you card.
- Thank the person for taking the time to meet with you and for providing valuable information.
- Write clearly (practice what you are going to say on a separate sheet of paper and check the spelling).

If your hand-writing is not legible, you should type a thank-you letter instead.

Thank-you letter

Make sure to:

- Use a standard business format when writing a letter (your mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, the date, the contact person's name, job title, and address).
- Thank the person for taking the time to meet with you and for providing valuable information.
- Sign off either by writing 'Sincerely' or 'Yours sincerely'.
- Spell-check the letter.