

Using Inspire Message Boards – Best Practices for Educators

Every year, interest in using the Inspire message boards in Career Cruising grows. That's great news! Students ask some excellent questions and get answers from professionals working in a variety of fields.

We also see some questions that are not well thought out. That is understandable due to the range in age and ability among students who can access Career Cruising. From time to time there are also nonsensical or even inappropriate messages posted. All of this is expected. Inspire network administrators work hard to screen all questions coming through so that career coaches never receive those messages - but they can't catch everything. In some cases, you may receive a flagged message if a message contained something an administrator feels you should know about. If you have access to Career Cruising, you will be able to view those flagged messages.

If that happens and you are the Inspire school contact, please follow up with the student and explain to him or her what the expectations are for using the message boards. Students who are repeat offenders may have their message board privileges revoked by Inspire Administrators.

There are things you can do as an educator to improve the quality of questions, and reduce the number of inappropriate questions.

The expectations for students using the message boards are simple: **1.** be respectful of Career Coaches - they are there to help! **2.** Formulate good questions that will help you learn more about the careers you are interested in

Another thing to keep in mind as an educator is that the message boards don't require any approval from school staff for a student to use them. That means that a student could ask a question at any time and any place. However, we've found that the best results come from asking career coach questions as part of guided lessons on careers in the classroom.

So what are the elements of a good message board question? Here are some suggestions that we've heard from Career Coaches and developed along the way that you can use when planning a lesson in your class:

- 1. Review other questions:** Before asking a question a student should take a look at answers to previous questions on the message boards to avoid duplication.

2. **Do research:** The student should have at least a little understanding about the career at hand. They can get information directly from the Career Cruising profile or from other sources.

3. **Ask specific questions:** Instead of a question to a baker like "do you like your job?" rephrase it to say "What are the top three things that you like about your job?". The more specific and detailed the question is, the better and more informative the answers tend to be. Career coaches probably enjoy answering those questions more!

4. **Include important details:** If the student wants to ask the career coach their opinion on something they are doing related to the career, the student should make sure to include the specifics. Instead of "would I be good at this career?" a student could say "I'm not the strongest mathematician, but I excel at problem solving; should I consider a career in Engineering?" That was an actual question from a student posted to a message board.

5. **Use Career Cruising Resources:** It may also be helpful to review and/or use [Career Cruising's Message Boards Classroom Activity](#). It's a helpful guide that builds a broader context and understanding of a career before generating ideas for questions to ask an expert on the message boards.

We truly appreciate the hard work that our education partners put in introducing their students to the tools that Inspire provides. The message boards present a unique way to inform young people about the careers and industries important to our communities, our region and our state. We want to make sure that not only are students and educators benefiting from these tools, but that our volunteer career coaches feel that their time is well spent answering questions.

Thank you for your service!