



FUTURE BOUND

Modular Curriculum *for Middle School Teachers*

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INTRODUCTION

FutureBound emerged from the premise that if we can “meet students where they are” in their digital use and engage them in fun and beneficial ways, then we have the potential to significantly affect how students learn about college. The overarching game-based college access project began with the creation and dissemination of two high school games, *Application Crunch* and *Mission: Admission*, designed to cultivate college application knowledge and strategies. The games proved effective in increasing college-going efficacy and college knowledge and engaged high school players for extended periods of time (reports available at pullias.usc.edu). Our team of researchers from the University of Southern California’s Pullias Center for Higher Education and game designers from USC’s Game Innovation Lab spoke with numerous high school students, teachers, and counselors when designing and conducting research on the games. Each group expressed a strong desire to begin college awareness activities prior to high school so that students entered high school with a clear understanding of the importance of doing well from the ninth grade forward. Despite the importance of reaching students early, few college-related activities, tools or programs for middle school students exist.

In response to this challenge — and with generous funding from the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Science (R305A110288) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation — our team created the *FutureBound* game targeting middle school students. Utilizing an iterative design process, we worked closely with middle school students from James A. Foshay Learning Center and New Los Angeles Charter School to ensure that the game would resonate with our target audience.



FutureBound is designed to increase college knowledge, boost college-going efficacy and demonstrate ties between middle school, high school, college and career. The game is a story-driven action-adventure game about building career ambitions, demonstrating self-advocacy, and exhibiting passion. While the game is intended (and is effective) as a “stand-alone” game, we believe that game play will be enriched by teacher-lead activities. Consequently, we have created these curricular supports that extend *FutureBound* beyond the realm of the digital and into the classroom. Activities set the context for gameplay and introduce students to new college and career terms and concepts. Debriefing activities emphasize real-life applicability and extend discussion of lessons learned through gameplay. A modular design of the curriculum allows for flexibility in how the program is implemented in a variety of settings and in response to time constraints.

DESCRIPTION OF GAME

In the *FutureBound* game, a player takes on the role of a middle school student who is confronted by monsters representing doubts and fears. By talking to other students about their passions, the player gains career ambitions and related powers to fight against these monsters. The player explores twenty exciting career paths, collecting unique powers associated with each and using them to overcome challenges. For example, by adopting the Astronomer career ambition, the player gains the power to summon an orbiting moon to protect her. This feature exposes players to the intrigue of various careers and in turn engages students in thinking about their future. Game play allows the player to explore jobs she might never have considered before, and incentivizes her to adopt a variety of different career ambitions. Through the process of exploring these aspirational paths, the player is introduced to related vocabulary like “career,” “degree,” “expertise,” and the concept of educational prerequisites for different careers.

During the player’s adventures, she encounters more than thirty characters with colorful backstories and a variety of different passions. Through these characters the player learns how to leverage social resources to prepare for high school and college. Eight major story lines scaffold gameplay and span across 7th, 8th, and 9th grades, offering the opportunity for players to explore how to excel in middle school and be successful in the transition into high school. Because the game format provides an opportunity for players to experience taking on different roles and testing a variety of strategies without being encumbered by real-world constraints, the game carves out a safe space where the player learns from her mistakes.

In *FutureBound*, the player begins by creating and customizing a character, followed by a brief tutorial level, in which the player is walked through the basic gameplay systems before starting the three main stages of the game. The narrative of seventh grade focuses on the player’s character working to switch into a higher-level math class, so that she will become college-ready. Eighth grade is about encouraging the passions of those around her, and revolves around competing with a friend for the school’s annual spirit award. Ninth grade marks the transition from middle school to high school. The narrative in ninth grade explores the stresses and difficulties of changing relationships with friends and peers, and the importance of showcasing the expertise and ability gained through the pursuit of passions. Throughout the game, the character battles monsters that symbolize self-doubt. She does so by employing career-related powers she has built up during the game. There is no explicit scoring in *FutureBound*, but there is a sense of progression that is conveyed by the narrative, by conversations between in-game characters, and by unlocking new career information and career-based special powers.

The best way to understand the game is to play it!

CURRICULUM RATIONALE

To many Americans, higher education is simply the natural next step between high school and a career. In an increasingly competitive job market, a college degree is rapidly evolving into a prerequisite. However, as college tuition skyrockets and youth unemployment rises, a growing number of children are either left deep in debt, forced to drop out or, all too often, simply never see higher education as a possibility. Unfortunately, children of low-income communities are the most likely to fall into these traps. Their schools are too overburdened and understaffed to offer adequate guidance, and community support infrastructures and expectations are often either absent or inadequate.

One of the most effective routes to education and empowerment may also be one of the least traditional: videogames. FutureBound Games is a research project dedicated to creating games that will help under-privileged children plan and be prepared for their future after middle and high school.

FutureBound has three main objectives:

1. Set high career and education expectations
2. Broaden articulation and understanding of career options
3. Reinforce the importance of self-advocacy

While effective on its own, *FutureBound's* lessons do not exist in a vacuum. The game is most effective (and enjoyable) when its lessons are extended beyond the realm of the digital. The goal of the *FutureBound* curriculum is to do just that.

This curriculum is comprised of three scalable modules. While designed sequentially, they may be used individually or in alternate order. There are many opportunities for activities to be extended or shortened, depending on the instructor's objectives. Rather than an instruction manual for how *FutureBound* must be used, consider this a handbook that suggests some of the possible uses of the game. Teachers, parents, after-school instructors, and other interested educators – Take this guide and this game and make them your own. Help your children own their dreams.

Guidelines: Since the unit and its modules have been designed with customization in mind, there are several ways this curriculum can be used. Each module can stand on its own as a companion to *FutureBound*, or they can all be used together as part of a comprehensive unit.

Additionally, embedded within each unit are two special categories: Bonus Activities and Post-Game Activities. These are just what they seem. Each lesson, as written, takes between 1-2 class periods. Bonus Activities are opportunities to extend the lesson further and explore the issues more critically. Post-Game activities are, simply, capstone activities that are most effective when used after playing *FutureBound*.

If you chose to use all three modules, there are two main tracks to choose:

1. Play *FutureBound* for one day before Module One's post game activity, and then play it for a second day before Module Two's post game activity.
2. Play *FutureBound* for two consecutive days before Module Two's post game activity. This will require a slight modification of Module One's Triangle Debate activity. Rather than explore them through game-play, establish classroom definitions of passion and skill.

Length: 6-10 days for all three modules, including two game-play days

Common Core Standards: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.9.

MODULE 1: Passion vs. Skill (1-2 days)

Rationale: Many middle school students have not thought about what careers they might be interested in, let alone what college they want to attend. They are too busy trying to survive adolescence and make it to high school. However, as specialized magnet schools increase in popularity, the choices culminating middle school students make often do directly affect their ultimate career and education options. Students should understand that, while they are certainly not locked into whatever career they choose as a 13-year-old, thinking about the process now increases the likelihood that they will ultimately settle upon a life path of their choice, rather than of default. This module uses self-reflection, class debate, and critical analysis of the relationships in *FutureBound* to push students to think about to reach their dreams.

Objectives: This module is aligned with FutureBound’s objectives to set high career and higher education expectations and reinforce the importance of self-advocacy.

- Students will identify their passions and interests
- Students will be able to define the *FutureBound* areas of interest (creativity, curiosity, community, technology, performance) and how they relate to future success
- Students will be able to articulate their understanding of the interrelationship between passion and skill
- Students will share an experience when self-advocacy helped them reach a goal or overcome a challenge

Materials: 1 blank sheet of paper per student; tape for Gallery Walk

Motivation: *Find Your Passions*

Tell students to divide a piece of paper into three horizontal sections. Label one section “Passions”; another section “Joys”; and a third “Connections”. Under Passions, write a list of 10 things you are passionate/care about. These should be nouns that range from ideas like “justice” to entities like “The Pittsburgh Steelers” to things more close to home, like “family” and “community”.

Under “Joys” list 10 things you enjoy doing (These should be verbs — running, playing with friends, eating, playing video games, etc). Now draw lines connecting your joys to your passions. If they connect at all (if you play video games with your family and eat most of your meals with them, draw lines connecting family to video games and eating.) It might get messy; many items will probably have more than one line connecting them. That’s okay! Draw as many connections as you can think of.

After drawing all of your connections, see which Passions and Joys have the most lines connected to them. Circle them.

Now, look at the ways your Passion and Joy are connected. How do they interact with each other? Can you have one without the other? What do they have in common? Could you combine them to make a career? In the “Connections” section, draw pictures or list all of the different ways the two interact. For example, if you circled video games and playing, you could list things such as: playing my Xbox, making video games, being a video game tester, Minecraft parties with my friends, talking about games, sitting indoors, etc.

Presentation: *Gallery Walk*

Discuss what patterns or trends the students saw during their gallery walk. Were there passions that everyone had? Were there any passions that weren't repeated? Why might those have been the case? Any surprises?

Explain that, in today's society, there are five attributes that are a necessity, not just for success, but for survival in the 21st century: creativity, curiosity, a strong community, knowledge of technology, and performance. Write the list on the board and briefly discuss why each item is important as a class.

- *Creativity* – Many students will have jobs that don't even exist yet. All of them will have multiple jobs that may be very different. Creativity lets you think outside the box and get the most out of new experiences.
- *Curiosity* – Curiosity drives us to learn more and to explore. Without it, we don't learn new things and would very quickly start relying on outdated information and tools. Imagine if teachers never learned anything new. We would never use computers in class!
- *Community* – Community includes family, friends, co-workers, online relationships, and more. A community can support you but, even more than that, it offers feedback, pushes you to learn more and think about things differently, and works as a network to expose you to new ideas and experiences.
- *Technology* – Our phones are now computers. In another five years, when our watches and glasses are also computers, that idea might seem quaint. Almost every job requires some understanding of technology. More importantly, technology is now a part of our every day lives and, since it affects us so strongly, it's important to understand it.
- *Performance* – Performance is the ability to express yourself through physical achievement and public presentation. Whether you're a musician on stage, an athlete on the field, or an entrepreneur presenting to investors, the ability to act in front of an audience and while under pressure is an essential part of any job.

Explain that these are the five interests in *FutureBound* and, as the students play, they should pay attention to how each interest is strengthened.

FutureBound also describes the skills that are necessary for certain careers. Create a class definition of skill and facilitate a brief discussion by returning to our video game example or an example your class worked with. What are some skills you need in order to be good at video games (fast reflexes, problem solving, ability to focus, etc.)?

Post-Game: Which interests did students most develop? How did they demonstrate those interests within the game? Which skills did they develop and use the most?

Activity: *Triangle Debate*

Now that students have identified their career goals, played *FutureBound*, and discussed passions and skills, it's time for them to discuss which they believe is more important – passions or skills. Or perhaps a combination of the two?

Round One: Students go to one side of the room if they believe developing your passions are more important for reaching your goals, the other side if they believe developing your skills is more important. Everyone **MUST** choose a side. Give each group 3-5 minutes to discuss, then randomly call on people to make their argument. This can go on as long as you like and take the form of a mediated conversation or a guided debate.

Round Two: This time, students have three options: Passions, Skills, or both. Most will probably chose both. Again, give a few minutes to discuss, and then have them explain why.



MODULE 2: Career Umbrellas (1-2 hours)

Rationale: Far more children dream of becoming professional athletes than will ever actually play in a major sport. Many budding authors will never have a book published. Similarly, many children who love basketball will never pursue a career in sports because they don't think they're athletic enough. This does not mean that those goals are silly or out-of-reach. It simply means that there are many career options of which children are not aware. This module will explore the difference between "jobs" and "professions" and help children discover just how many jobs fall under the career umbrellas of "sports" or "writing".

Objectives: This module is aligned with FutureBound's objective to broaden articulation and understanding of career options.

- Students will be able to name at least five different jobs within at least two career paths of their choice
- Using their target passions and careers, students will create their own job descriptions
- Students will use online research to create a timeline showing how they can reach a career of their choice

Materials: Build-A-Career deck; Help Wanted worksheet; Help Wanted sample worksheet

Motivation: Write the word "Sports" on the board and draw a circle around it. Tell the class to brainstorm all of the jobs relating to sports they can think of. Drawing lines to the circle, write all of the jobs the students brainstorm.

Draw a circle around one of the jobs. Now, repeating the same process, ask the students to list all of the skills required for that job. As you write the skills, cluster them together (technical skills near each other, etc.). Circle one or more of the clusters and ask students how you can learn those skills. Repeat the process.

Now, erase all of the words that are not in circles. You should be left with a map that roughly outlines career-job-skills-education. By the end of this lesson, students will have created a similar map for a career of their choice.

Presentation: *Job vs. Profession*

Ask students what the difference is between "sports" and one of the jobs they listed (we'll stick with physical therapy). Sports is a profession. Physical therapy is a job.

Professions are broad fields – not everyone who works in sports can be a professional athlete, but without all of the other workers, there could be no professional athletes. Jobs are the specific roles within a profession – the equipment managers, film editors, analysts, trainers, and coaches.

All of these jobs use different skill sets for one common cause – a love of sports. In the next activity, we will further explore this concept.

Application: *Build-A-Career*

Students will now combine their knowledge of passions and skills with their knowledge of jobs and careers to create jobs of their own.

Model this with the class first. Draw one card from the “interests” deck and one card from the “professions” deck (you can also include a card from the “skills” deck). Read them aloud and write the words on the board. Brainstorming time! What are some jobs within the given profession that could best use the passion?

Now split the class into groups of 3-5 and either distribute decks or have one person from each class select a card from your deck. Give the groups 5 minutes to brainstorm as many jobs as possible. Have them select one and write a description including: job description, necessary skills, education, and salary. These can be silly. The important part is that they recognize how many different options there are. Each group can either share their jobs or select one job and create a help wanted poster using the template.

Post-Game: Either using one of the careers they brainstormed during the Build-A-Game phase or a career they learned about while playing *FutureBound*, students conduct online research to create an accurate help wanted poster. This time, rather than brainstorming and relying mostly on creativity, students will look up average salary, required education, common employers, and typical responsibilities for their selected job.

MODULE 3: Character Maps (2-4 hours)

Rationale: *FutureBound* and the previous modules primarily dealt with concepts. This series of activities provides the opportunity to both see and interact with those concepts. Students will make Character Maps of successful individuals and their journeys (they can choose their own or select from a list of socially conscious individuals). By sharing these maps, they will see how varied the “road to success” is. They will then create their own Character Map, plotting what they will need to achieve in order to reach their goals. This module, by examining case studies and encouraging students to make their own Character Maps, provides concrete examples of the issues and lessons explored within *FutureBound* and the preceding modules.

The Character Map consists of two parts and is similar to character sheets in role-playing games. The first half of the map contains the basic stats – name, education, interests they pursue, etc. The second half deals with story – how the person made a difference, what their childhood was like, a major challenge they faced and overcame.

Objectives: This module is aligned with *FutureBound*’s objectives to set high career and education expectations, broaden articulation and understanding of career options, and reinforce the importance of self-advocacy

- Students will be able to describe and analyze the career path and character attributes of a professional, emphasizing the conflicts they had to overcome
- Students will compare and contrast multiple character maps
- Students will be able to outline the path to the career of their choice and describe the interests they will need to explore in order to reach those goals
- Students will reflect and critique the character maps and presentations of their peers
- Students will be able to draw connections between the gameplay of *FutureBound* and the real-life pursuit of goals.

Materials: Victor Rios biography; Career Map worksheet; Innovator list

Motivation: Tell the students that thinking about your future isn’t just a matter of picking a career where you can make a lot of money or telling yourself you’ll own at least 5 businesses, though those are valid goals – it also means thinking about the mark you want to make on the world. Both independently and as a class, we’re going to look at the stories of some people who have made a difference. We’ll chart the path they took to success, analyze the personality traits that helped them succeed, and, finally, you will each make your own map to success.

Read the Victor Rios biography as a class or watch this PBS video about Victor Rios. Either while reading the story or afterward, fill out a Character Map for the Rios as a class. First focus on the story and basic information portions. These are the basic facts taken directly from the story. Students may disagree about the major challenge the person overcame (lack of education/racism/etc.). They don't all have to align, as long as the student can make a persuasive case for the challenge they choose to highlight.

Next are the more subjective portions, the interest list and difference-making section. Facilitate a brief discussion for each item, making sure that students qualify their opinions with biographical information. Rather than choosing a number from 1-10, ask whether an interest area scores low, medium, or high. Once the class agrees on a range, you can select a specific number (or, if you prefer, simply stick with the low-med-high system). After the rest of the page has been completed, use the student's observations and prior discussions to analyze lessons that can be taken from the innovator's life.

Presentation: Distribute Innovator List. Victor Rios' story is just one of the countless ways people have made a difference in the world. To get a real sense of the breadth of possibilities, have students (individually or in pairs) select an innovator from the list. They should have the freedom to profile an innovator who isn't on the list – there are innovators everywhere!

Students will now research their innovator online and fill out a Character Sheet. Students can either present their innovator to the class or hang them around the classroom for a gallery walk.

As students listen and observe, they should note: What is the most common "high" interest area? The lowest? Are there any struggles that many innovators seem to share? How are they overcome? Are there any other observations?

Choose several students to share their opinions.

POST-PLAY: Drawing upon the passions and career paths they explored in earlier activities, the experiences of the profiled innovators, and the ideas explored in *FutureBound*, students should make a Character Sheet for themselves. They will predict struggles they might face (or even are currently facing), and decide what attributes will be most important in order for them to reach their goals. They can even draw how they think they'll look as adults!

APPENDIX

Build-a-Career Brainstorming Cards

Materials: The deck is split into three types of cards: Interests, Professions, and Skills

Players: 1-4 per group. Max of 5 groups per deck.

Objective: Brainstorm as many careers within the drawn cards' parameters as possible.

Rules:

Beginner

Each player/group draws one Interest card and one Profession card. They now have 3 minutes to brainstorm careers within their profession that revolve around their interest.

Ex) Curiosity/Medical – researcher, mad scientist, medical professor. Players can choose one career for which to make a “Help Wanted” advertisement (research optional).

Advanced

Each player/group draws one Interest, Profession, and Skill card. They now have 3 minutes to brainstorm careers within their profession and revolve around their interest.

Example: Curiosity/Medical/Computer Programming – write a program that analyzes DNA, make a game that lets people explore different diseases.

Players can choose one career for which to make a “Help Wanted” advertisement (research optional).

Interests

CURIOSITY

CREATIVITY

TECHNOLOGY

COMMUNITY

PERFORMANCE

Professions

ART

FILM

SPORTS

RESEARCH

MEDICAL

FINANCIAL

MECHANICAL

SCIENCE

LEGAL

POLITICAL

ENTERTAINMENT

BUSINESS

Skills

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING	ESSAY WRITING	MATH
PHYSICAL	CHARISMA	PUBLIC SPEAKING
DRAWING	ACTING	PROBLEM SOLVING
ELECTRONICS	PERSEVERANCE	BUILDING
COOKING	COUNSELING	LANGUAGE
SOCIALIZING	DESIGNING	NEGOTIATING

HELP WANTED!!

Job Title:

Employer:

Required Experience:

Business Description and History:

Preferred Attributes:

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

TO apply, please send an e-mail to jobhunting@futurebound.org which includes:

- Your name and contact information
- A resume
- Your reasons for applying

HELP WANTED!!

Job Title: Mad Scientist

Employer: Slightly Strange Science, Inc.

Required Experience: Must have a Ph.D. in biochemistry or a related field. At least five years working as a certified mad scientist. Experience reanimating dead matter is a must.

Business Description and History: Slightly Strange Science is at the forefront of today's scientific and medical fields. We don't worry about little things like ethics and regulations. Instead, we focus on what truly matters – new inventions and, our specialty, bringing dead matter back to life!

SSS began in 2010 when our founder, Dr. Good, realized that the brilliant scientific thinkers of his day were all being forced out of work for being too "eccentric". Also, he was fired from his research position at USC for extracting the brains of undergraduate volunteers. Since that fateful day, Dr. Good and the rest of SSS have led breakthroughs in stem cell research, organ transplants, and monster creation.

Preferred Attributes: Candidates must demonstrate an affinity for creativity, curiosity, and performance. Our scientists specialize in out-of-the-box thinking and must excel at recognizing and addressing problems where others see only impossibility. This line of work is not for the easily discouraged, since each success is the result of thousands of experiments gone awry. Additionally, since we do work on the edge of our field, candidates must be comfortable using and discussing all of the latest medical technology.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE: Managing a lab staff of up to 15 minions, giving monthly progress presentations, handling dangerous materials and creatures, avoiding arrest, and the creation of at least one new creature every fiscal quarter.

To apply, please send an e-mail to jobhunting@slightlystrange.org which includes:

- Your name and contact information
- A resume
- Your reasons for applying
- A sample of an evil creation

Innovator List

Bill Gates – computer scientist, entrepreneur
Steve Jobs – entrepreneur
Steve Wozniak – computer programmer
John Dau – author, activist
Sherry Lansing – actress, executive
Talib Kweli – rapper
Neil deGrasse Tyson – physicist, author
Greg Boyle – activist
Ashley Shuyler – activist, author
Jorge Munoz – activist
Jane Goodall – environmentalist
Oprah Winfrey – entrepreneur
Barack Obama – president
Maya Angelou – poet
Magic Johnson – athlete
Sarah Kay – poet, educator
Natalie Portman – actress
Jacqueline Novogratz – activist, entrepreneur
Jose Antonio Vargas – journalist
Suzan-Lori Parks – playwright
Junot Diaz – author
Kay Ryan – poet
Amir Abo-Shaeer – educator, engineer
ZZ Packer – author
Angela Bassett – actor
Ntozake Shange – playwright, poet
Tyler Perry – actor, director
Bell Hooks – educator, activist
Nalo Hopkins – science fiction author
Wanda Coleman – poet
Brenda Romero – game designer
Wanda Coleman – poet
Sharon Draper – educator, activist
Antwone Fisher – director, playwright
Wynton Marsalis – musician
Vivian Stringer – basketball coach
Angela Davis – activist, author
Spike Lee – director
Nikki Giovanni – poet
Toni Morrison – author

Terry McMillan – author
Alice Walker – author
Ken Levine – video game designer
Michael Morhaime – video game designer, entrepreneur
Will Wright – video game designer
Malcolm Gladwell – author
Ang Lee – director
Amy Tan – author
Kal Penn – actor
Michelle Rhee – activist
Maya Lin – visual artist, architect
Yo Yo Ma – musician
Vera Wang – designer
Kristi Yamaguchi – athlete
Angela Oh – activist, lawyer, educator
Connie Chung – journalist
Indra Nooyi – executive
Michelle Kwan – athlete
David Ho – scientist
Jerry Yang – entrepreneur
Bobby Scott – politician
Michelle Wie – athlete
Harold Koh – lawyer, legal scholar
Bobby Jindal – politician
Laurence Yep – author
Greg Louganis – athlete
Anna Sui – designer
Maxine Hong Kingston – author
George Takei – actor
Victor Rios – educator
Richard Blanco – poet
Luis Rodriguez – author, activist
Dolores Huerta – activist
Tracy Fullerton – game designer, educator
Lisa Fernandez – athlete
Anita Sarkeesian – media critic & activist
Viola Davis – actress
Markus “Notch” Persson – game developer
Margaret Atwood – author

Biography of Victor Rios

Victor Rios grew up in poverty. He was born in 1978 and, after moving to Oakland, California from Mexico when he was two, he and his mother bounced from house to house, living in some of the most notorious projects in Oakland. One place was so bad that it had rats everywhere. One day they crawled into his baby cousin's crib and started to chew his face. They chewed it so badly that he ended up spending months in the hospital and having reconstructive surgery on his face.



His mother moved from job to job, finding whatever work was available. Victor worked to make extra money when he could, first dropping out of school in 8th grade to mow lawns. His mother convinced him to go back, but not for long. By 14, Victor had found another way to make money, fit in, and stay safe in his neighborhood. He joined a gang.

He left home, stole and lived in cars for months, and fell into an increasingly violence lifestyle. It caught up to him when, at 15, his best friend, a gang member called Smiley, was murdered by a rival gang.

Smiley's death changed Victor's life. He saw where the path of a gang member could lead and decided he wanted out. With the help of a supportive teacher and other adult mentors, Victor turned his life around.

Even though he was often tempted to return to street life, Victor refused to give in. He received a high school diploma, went to college, and eventually even earned a doctorate from the University of California at Berkley.

Victor has devoted his life to helping others escape the trap of gang life. He has worked as a gang intervention counselor and written two books, a memoir and an analysis of why boys join gangs. He currently teaches at the University of California at Santa Barbara and shares his story at schools around the country.

Career Map

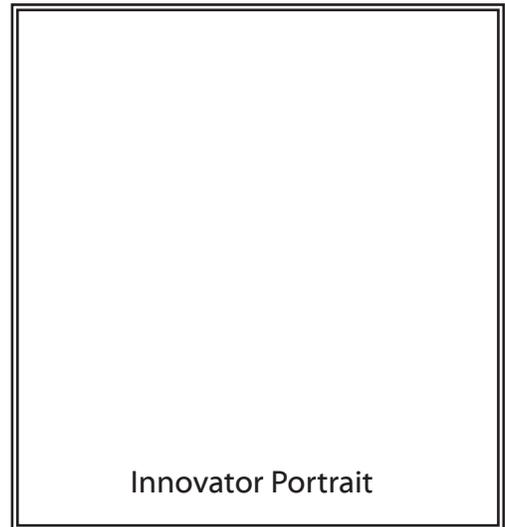
Innovator Name:

Job:

Profession:

Education:

Place of birth:



Interests

Curiosity

Creativity

Technology

Community

Performance

Innovation

Impact: How did they make difference and succeed?

3-Sentence Summary

Childhood

Challenge

Lessons